

Huskers Illustrated

APRIL, 1984

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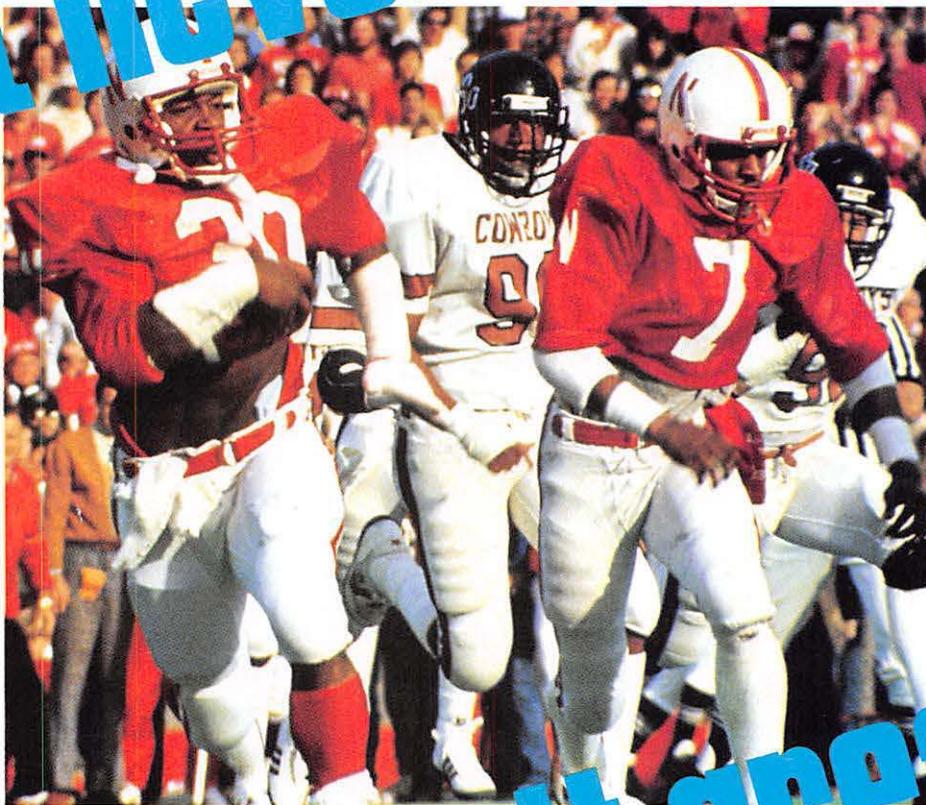


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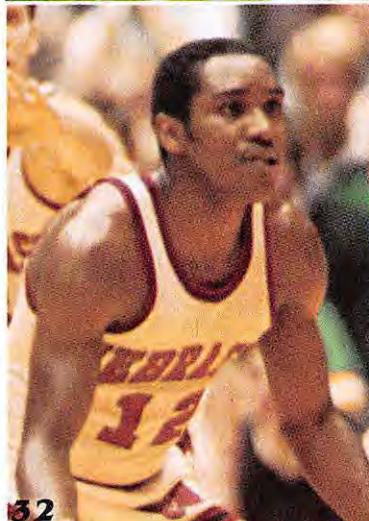
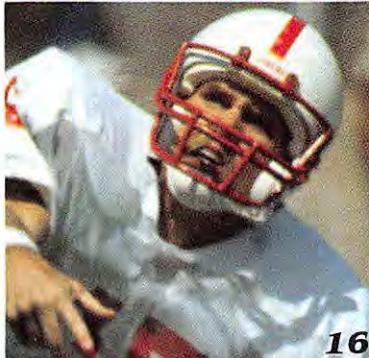
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NU's 1958 giant slayers

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Kansas and Kansas State were the basketball kings of the nation, but they both tasted defeat in Lincoln that year.

Spring cleaning time

16

Time to clean out those ghosts and memories of the greatest offensive football machine ever and start finding new stars for 1984.

The newest Huskers

26

Nebraska coaches felt some disappointment on Feb. 8, but when the dust had cleared, they felt extremely satisfied with the 1984 recruiting class.

Perseverance pays for Ponce

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Huskers' little guard has used quickness and bulldog attitude to make a big impact in the Big Eight.

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Nebraska's unbeaten Jayvee football team earned its nickname.

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Pepin has traveled the world (most of the time by telephone) to bring in top track recruits.

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On the cover

Sure, there's Husker football life after Turner Gill, Mike Rozier, Dean Steinkuhler and Irving Fryar — the most celebrated players in recent school history.

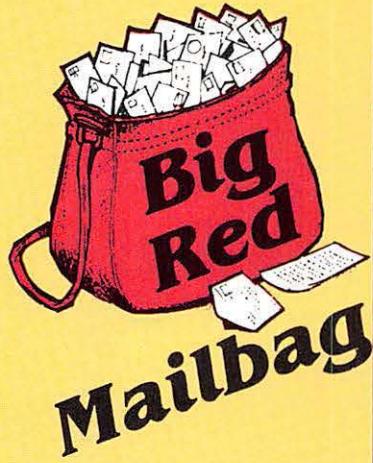
Their replacements will be determined during spring drills, but the four who posed in a chilly, empty Memorial Stadium in mid-winter for Randy Hampton's camera are the heirs apparent.

From left to right, front row, Craig Sundberg will open up in Gill's quarterback slot, and Jeff Smith will fill Rozier's ample role at I-back. Rear, center Mark Traynowicz won't line up at Steinkuhler's guard position, but he will take over as the focal point in the line in a Husker bid for a third straight Outland-Lombardi sweep; Shane Swanson will finally emerge from Fryar's shadow after two years of picking up leftovers.

in the next issue...

There will be more on spring football, plus a wrap-up on Husker basketball and a review of Nebraska's upcoming wrestling team's NCAA tournament showing.

Letters



Dear Big Red Mailbag:

Thank you, Mike Rozier, for a great season and the second Cornhusker Heisman. Thank you, Dean Steinkuhler, for the second straight Lombardi and the third straight Outland Award. Thank you, Coach Tom Osborne, for your 100th victory. It couldn't have been done in better style.

Thank you, "The Scoring Explosion," for the most productive and exciting offense in history. Thank you, Rozier, Mark Schellen, Irving Fryar and Turner Gill, for the best backfield in college football history.

A special thanks to every player on the Nebraska Cornhusker football team for bringing all of us Husker fans the most unforgettable season I have seen.

I would also like to let it be known that I feel Coach Osborne did the right thing in going for the two-point PAT in the Orange Bowl. The greater part of Nebraska was behind him. The Cornhuskers are still No. 1 to me, and they will remain No. 1 until the day I die.

Loren Wagner
Culbertson, Neb.

Dear Big Red Mailbag:

I still cannot accept or believe what Coach Osborne did. The most important thing coming out of the Orange Bowl was to win the national championship, not a particular game. After last year's misfortune at Penn State, the team deserved a championship.

Everyone, including the coach, should have realized that a win or tie would give Nebraska the No. 1 rating. The situation was treated like a poker game, and it is totally wrong for any coach to do such a thing to a team that worked so hard to attain a championship.

I think Coach Osborne is a fine coach and person, but in this case, he has let down the assistant coaches, the players and fans. The hardest part of it all is that we must forever live with this in our minds.

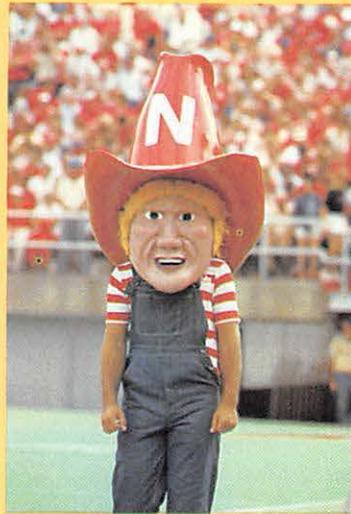
Mark Glass
Ebensburg, Pa.

•This one begs for some editorial opinionating. Mark's contention that Osborne's decision to go for the ill-fated two-point conversion in the Orange Bowl was unfair to the assistants and players doesn't cut it here.

Several other readers also claimed the decision was a disservice to the team. We would be more sympathetic to a fan who would write: "The call was unfair to me because I was counting on a national championship, and now I'm disappointed."

The players solidly backed the decision, publicly and privately. Several on the offense in those dramatic final moments said they would have called a time-out to try to talk Osborne out of it if he had ordered a place kick for a tie.

If you have questions or comments, you may write the BIG RED MAILBAG, Box 83222, Lincoln, NE 68501.



The decision also was made in concert with the assistants. No one had invested as much time and energy in the pursuit of a national championship as Osborne, his aides and players. We have yet to hear one of *them* say it was a bum call. Indeed, the opinion among the principals was that it would have been unfair to them to kick—ED.

Dear Big Red Mailbag:

Two weeks after the Orange Bowl, I will try to make an objective appraisal of the disaster in Miami.

My favorite coach and team has been outcoached and out-emoted. We should have gone with the percentages — kicked the extra point and taken No. 1 back to Nebraska (and Kansas).

Don M. DuTeau
Kansas City, Kan.

Dear Big Red Mailbag:

The Big Eight Conference apparently has little consideration for what happens to a team that represents it at the Orange Bowl. We've seen four games in person since 1978 and have never seen top-notch officiating.

The Big Eight should insist that the Orange Bowl be impartial (the scoreboard), allow practice time for Big Eight schools, insist on the best officials with universal college rules, insist on better field conditions, have the O. B. allow more tickets to the host team when a local team is the opponent, take charge of controlling the band playing and generally police its interests.

The NCAA must not have monitored this game. Surely, the rude band playing could have been controlled, the scoreboard antics could have been stopped and the variance of the rules could

be policed.

The officials allowed Miami to spike the ball, let fans run on the field without penalty and allowed the Miami band to play constantly when Nebraska had the ball.

We think that everyone concerned abandoned good sportsmanship principles to obtain the goal of the 50th anniversary at any cost.

We, of course, don't know if Nebraska would have won the game under impartial conditions, but we certainly ought to strive for better principles if we are to continue bowl games.

Joan and Russ Swanson
Omaha, Neb.

Dear Big Red Mailbag:

There is a Cornhusker player who deserves much more recognition than he has received — Turner Gill.

In three years, he never lost a Big Eight game in which he was the quarterback. It's due to Turner, I feel, that Mike Rozier became a Heisman winner. It was his brilliance and clear head that gave us this past, unbelievably super year. He was, indeed, the glue that held this great team together.

He is a winner's winner.

Now that he is leaving us, can't we recognize his great contribution to a great team? If only I could reach all the football fans in Nebraska, I would originate a petition to have Turner's No. 12 retired.

In my opinion, the university was remiss in not retiring Turner's number, along with Rozier's and Steinkuhler's.

Polly Sawyer
Beaver City, Neb.

• Under Athletic Department policy, a player's number will be retired if he wins the Heisman Trophy or the Outland Trophy and Lombardi Award in the same year. Six numbers have been retired: Rozier's No. 30 and Steinkuhler's 71 after last season, Dave Rimington's 50 the year before, Johnny Rodgers' 20 and Rich Glover's 79 in 1972 and Tom Novak's 60 in 1949—ED.

Dear Big Red Mailbag:

After watching the Orange Bowl, I started reflecting back on the great '83 season. We have nothing to hang our heads about. We have a Heisman Trophy winner, four All-Americans and at least nine draftees in this year's NFL draft.

The No. 1 offensive machine in college history will never be forgotten. We may have ended up No. 2 in the polls, but you will always be No. 1 in our hearts.

I am proud of the way the Huskers fought back against what seemed like unsurmountable odds, playing on Miami's home field, a 17-point deficit. You did yourselves proud. Most teams

would have folded in the first quarter, but not the Huskers.

I would like to say thanks for the memories. I'm proud to be a South Dakotan for Nebraska.

Tom Abdouch
Wagner, S. D.

Dear Big Red Mailbag:

After our bitter loss to Miami last night and the loss of the national championship, I found that going through my old issues of your magazine helped to heal the wounds of defeat.

We had many accomplishments, and I've enjoyed watching this bunch of young men the last couple of years.

I only hope they all leave with more than any national title could give.

John Willms
Red Oak, Iowa

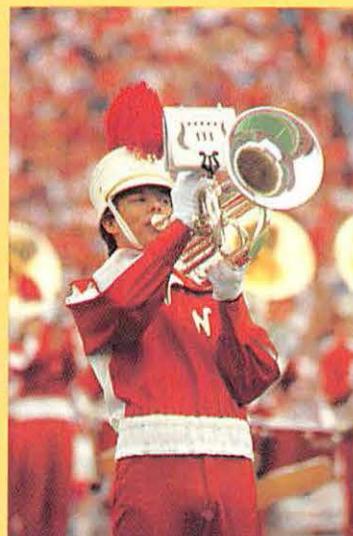
Dear Big Red Mailbag:

I'd like to inform you of an avid Nebraska Cornhusker fan. For the past two years, he's been my P. E. teacher and my science teacher.

During football season, he's always bragging about the Cornhuskers. He has Nebraska socks, a Nebraska wallet and also a Nebraska shirt. Last year, during science, on our tests, he would give us extra points if we knew the latest Nebraska football score.

He especially likes them when he's around the many K-State fans here in Bucklin. He's from Ravenna, Neb., and his hair is even red. His name is Dennis Shipp.

Monica Larson (13)
Bucklin, Kan.



Potpourri



Three straight championships celebrated at Devaney Sports Center.

Inside Husker sports

Saying he was going to "cut down on laundry bills," Football Coach Tom Osborne officially retired the jerseys of Mike Rozier and Dean Steinkuhler during the Big Eight championship banquet at the Bob Devaney Sports Center. They were the fifth and sixth Cornhusker numbers — Rozier's No. 30 and Steinkuhler's No. 71 — to be permanently removed from circulation.

In a gala celebration, attended by more than 3,000, Big Eight Commissioner Carl James handed the league championship trophy to Osborne for the third straight year, saying he heard the returning players already had coined the phrase, "Go for four in '84." Osborne immediately passed the trophy along to co-captain Mike Keeler.

It was a night for collecting the spoils of a 12-1 season, one which fell one point short of a

national championship for what Chancellor Martin Massengale called "the team that everybody in the country admired — America's team."

Osborne told his players: "As far as I'm concerned, you guys were the national champions." And he designed the Big Eight championship rings as nearly as possible to resembling national championship rings. "I thought we met a great deal of adversity in a very disciplined manner," Osborne said with thanks.

The seniors picked up their watches from position coaches as the crowd roared a greeting for each one. Rozier was saluted for his Heisman and Maxwell awards, among others. Steinkuhler took bows for the Outland and Lombardi awards.

Those two were joined on consensus All-American teams by Irving Fryar and All-Big Eight teams by Turner Gill, Scott Raridon, Mike Knox, Mark Traynowicz and Bret Clark.

Academic Counselor Ursula Walsh presented Scott Strasburger and Rob Stuckey as her 18th and 19th Academic All-Americans, along with Traynowicz, Brad Muehling, Craig Sundberg, Bill Weber and Todd Fisher in raising to 28 the number of Husker Academic All-Big Eight players.

Strength Coach Boyd Epley announced that fullback Mark Schellen made the All-America Strength team. The Huskers now have had 15 players make the team, with Ohio State (6) and Clemson (5) next in line. Nebraska was limited to one player this time after four made the team last year, Epley said.

Nebraska also had the maximum number of Kodak All-Americans allowed in Rozier, Steinkuhler and Fryar, giving Nebraska 13 on the elite team in the last 15 years.

Other special awards:

Tom Novak Award — Gill; Guy Chamberlin Trophy — Steinkuhler; Lincoln Sunrise Optimist Club outstanding senior awards — defensive line, Mike Tranmer; defensive back, Wade Praeuner; offensive back, Gill; offensive line, Steinkuhler; Lincoln Sowers award for tenacity by a senior non-starter — Tim Brungardt; Hinky Dinky most popular player — Rozier.

Massengale also presented a plaque to Osborne for his 100th career victory as head coach — against UCLA.

Former players Andra Franklin and Bill Barnett, Miami Dolphins; George Andrews, Los Angeles Rams; Junior Miller, Atlanta Falcons, and Dave Rimington, Cincinnati Bengals, came back for the celebration.

Tom Osborne got shut out in coach of the year awards in his conference and nationally, but he was the winner in a poll conducted by the *Knoxville, Tenn., News-Sentinel*.

The newspaper asked 59 college coaches to pick the nation's best coach. Osborne was the winner with 20 votes, followed by Michigan's



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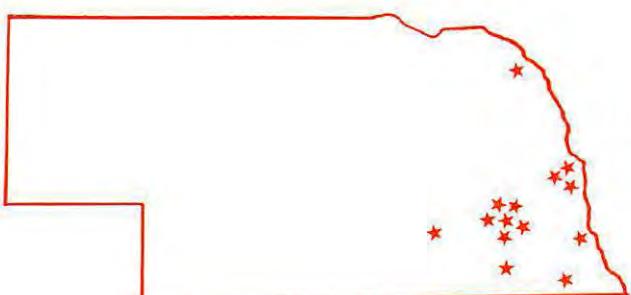
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Steinkuhler is handed his jersey by Osborne during retirement ceremony (top photo), while Tom passes along the third straight Big Eight championship (bottom photo).

Bo Schembechler and Penn State's Joe Paterno, with nine apiece.

Awards pile up sprinter Ottey

Nebraska senior sprinter Merlene Ottey continues to pile up the awards. The native of Jamaica was named her country's outstanding athlete for the fourth straight year; she received the Omaha Sportscasters Association special distinction award and *The Omaha World-Herald's* Frederick Ware Award as the state's outstanding college athlete.

Osborne's father dies

Charles Osborne, 77, former Hastings College

football center, Hastings businessman and civic leader and father of Nebraska Football Coach Tom Osborne died of a heart attack in February. A memorial fund in his memory was established, with contributions going to Hastings College or the Hastings Museum.

Reynolds joins Hall of Fame

Bobby Reynolds will join 10 other former greats with induction into the National Football Foundation Hall of Fame this summer.

The former Cornhusker All-American and now a Lincoln insurance executive, set a national scoring record (157 points) and scored 22 touchdowns as a sophomore in 1950, and his Nebraska season rushing record of 1,342 yards stood until Mike Rozier broke it last season.

Briefly:

Kelli Benson, Cathy Owen and Terri Parriott of the Nebraska women's basketball team made the district all-academic team...Basketball Coach Moe Iba joined football's Osborne with 100 career victories — Moe's coming against Eastern Washington, 105-71...Departures:Ray Tromba as assistant baseball coach, going home to California to enter business; Crystal Coleman from women's basketball and Brian Blankenship from football, for academic reasons...Recognition, of sorts, for former NU split end-punter Tim Smith, now with the mostly-hapless Houston Oilers: He was recipient of the inaugural "Unrecognized Athlete of the Year" by International Dull Folks, Unlimited, headquartered in Rochester, N. Y.

The group said Smith was "a worthy representative of all the anonymous, hard-working, talented and under-appreciated team sports figures who never have the opportunity to receive one of the more glamorous, conventional awards."

Smith's 83 receptions for the 2-14 Oilers were more than any of the three American Conference wide receivers chosen for the pro bowl, said James D. Stewart, the organization's "Chairman of the Bored."...Husker Mike Schuchart, the first Nebraska amateur to qualify for the U. S. Open since 1965, was named the 1983 state Amateur Golfer of the Year.

Bremser stepping down

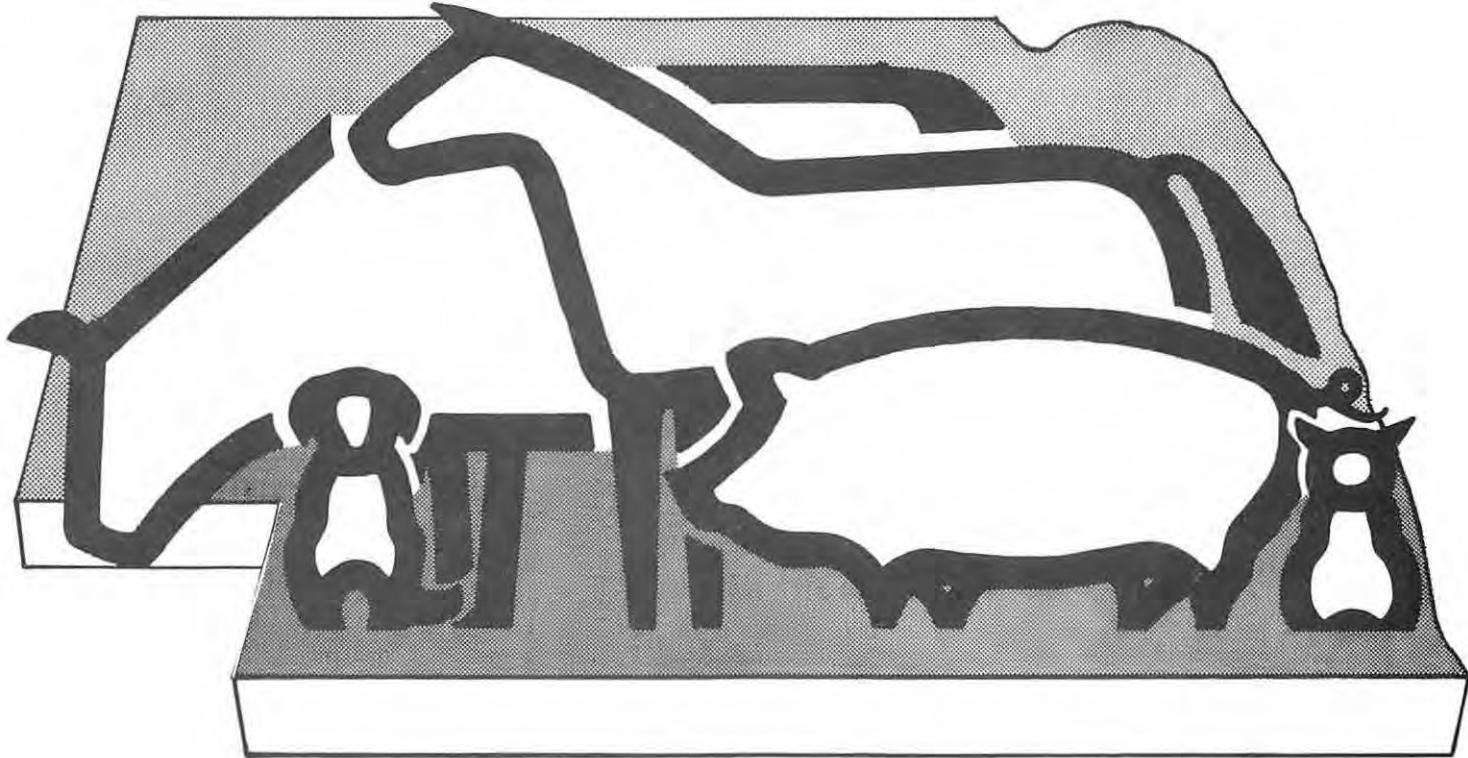
The big, booming, authoritative voice of Nebraska football has delivered its last "Man, Woman and Child!"

Lyell Bremser, affectionately known in and around Nebraska as "Mr. Football," has decided "to pass the torch" to a younger man.

After calling the radio play-by-play for every regular-season Nebraska football game since 1939, the 66-year-old Bremser is relinquishing that duty to Kent Pavelka, 34.

Bremser will continue to serve Omaha's KFAB as vice president and general manager, positions he has held for the past 28 years.

Pavelka, a graduate of Lincoln Northeast High



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Ex-Husker Valasek presents Heileman Trophy to Schnitzler.

School and the University of Nebraska, is KFAB's sports director and operations manager. KFAB has exclusive broadcast rights to NU football and basketball games and is completing its first year of a five-year contract estimated to be worth \$2.5 million.

Although Pavelka has been the play-by-play voice of Nebraska basketball for the past 10 years, he has been Bremser's color commentator for football during the same period.

Bremser said a replacement for Pavelka's color duties will be made at a later date.

"This is going to sound artificial," Pavelka said. "but when Lyell told me (last August) that he was making the change, the first thing I thought was how Tom Osborne must have felt when he was told he would succeed Bob Devaney.

"It's a strong analogy. Both men are Nebraska football legends. Both are incomparable. I even thought about Osborne's comments when he was

asked about the pressure to measure up. I feel the same as Tom. Pressure is self-imposed."

Bremser's NU football play-by-play career spanned the careers of 10 Husker head football coaches — Biff Jones, Glenn Presnell, A.J. Lewandowski, Potsy Clark, Bernie Masterson, Bill Glassford, Pete Elliott, Bill Jennings, Bob Devaney and Tom Osborne.

"Like the fella says, there's a time for everything," Bremser said. "You can't keep good young guys waiting in the wings forever."

The Reading Connection

However Nebraska fares in the pursuit of its sixth consecutive NCAA men's gymnastics championship at UCLA in mid-April, the Huskers will owe the largest measure of their success to Larry Moyer.

Moyer helped develop Nebraska's top three all-arounders — Jim Mikus, Chris Riegel and Wes Suter — at the famous Gymnastrum Sports School

in Reading, Pa.

NU Coach Francis Allen calls that trio "The Reading Connection."

"We're fortunate to have that much talent from one place come to Nebraska at one time," Allen said.

"I've been in meets where half of both teams are from Larry Moyer's club in Reading," Allen said. "When we went against Penn State, they had five of his boys and we had three. That shows how much of his life he's put into gymnastics."

Take it from all three Huskers. Gymnastics at the Gymnastrum was not easy.

"It's like an assembly line," Riegel said. "You bring 'em in when they're really young, work 'em through adolescence, teach 'em, and discipline 'em."

And Larry Moyer's discipline was legendary.

"He was mean," Riegel said. "His hand was a wooden wand. He'd pinch you so hard, you'd just sit there and scream and cry. The parents gave him the green light. If he didn't discipline you, you didn't go anywhere."

Mikus said Moyer's hand "was a good motivator. I use it myself when I'm trying to help a good young gymnast. Sure, we got pinched and slapped around. But it was for our own good."

Suter still remembers when he was 10 and Moyer "slapped me in the face. I left the gym and said I was never coming back. We all walked out and were kicked out of that gym so many times, it wasn't even funny."

Yet, for some reason, the Gymnastrum had a certain lure for the best young athletes in the area.

Suter lived in Downingtown, Pa., but his mother drove him 30 minutes, every day, five days a week, to Reading.

"They saw the Reading guys clean up just about every meet," he said.

"So my mom would pick me up after school. We'd eat and I'd do my homework on the way up. On the way back, I'd sleep in the car."

When Suter was eight and nine years old, he was working out three hours a night.

"I started when I was six," Riegel recalled. "We worked out 12 months a year. I'm serious. The only two days we really took off were Thanksgiving and Christmas Day. I mean, we worked out New Year's Eve, New Year's Day, Halloween, Fourth of July and Memorial Day."

That training planted the seeds for

what Riegel said are at least 70 major college gymnastics scholarships.

"Reading has people all over the country," said NU assistant Coach Jim Howard. "They have gymnasts at Nebraska, Penn State, Arizona State, LSU, you name it."

When Mikus was 12, he won a junior national meet in Illinois.

"My parents spent a ton of money on me in gymnastics," he said. "It wasn't just the lessons in Reading. It was the equipment, the travel, the food, the gas. All the money they spent, they probably could have put four people through college."

Mikus realizes the sacrifice wasn't automatic.

"My dad worked in a copper mill for 34 years," Mikus said. "He took me through it once. It was real noisy, real dirty and everybody worked his rear end off. I knew that wasn't for me."

So did Mikus' father. By the time he was graduated from high school, his son had competed in Russia, East Germany, New Zealand, South Africa, England and Canada.

Since coming to Nebraska, he has competed in China and Japan. "I've been more places at 21 than most people see in a lifetime," Mikus said. "I owe it all to the Gymnastrum."

The Gymnastrum was an old warehouse converted into a gym.

"I only spent two years there before we moved to Virginia," Suter said. "But I never lost contact. I went back to Reading every summer and lived with the Mikuses. It was the best training you could get."

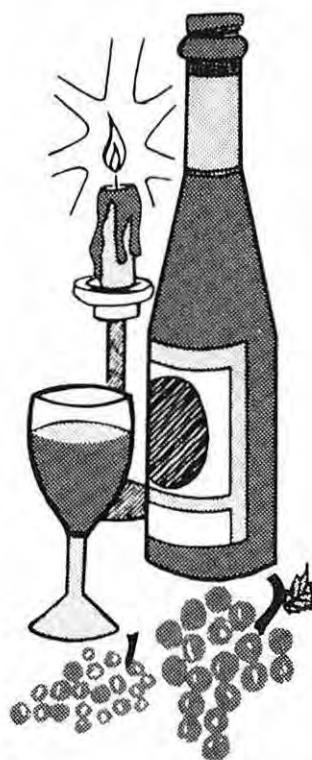
The Heileman Trophy winner is....

Even the most casual Nebraska football fan knows who won the Heisman Trophy last season, but how many know who won the Heileman Trophy?

Larry Valasek, a former Husker defensive back who understands the important contributions of scout team layers, founded the award as a means of honoring the scout-teamer of the year and promoting G. Heileman Brewing Co. products as part of his job with a Lincoln distributor.

Weekly winners were announced in the *Daily Nebraskan*, the student newspaper, and the season-long Heileman Trophy went to...tadah...defensive back Robb Schnitzler of Battle Creek.♦

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The old Coliseum was jumping the night Superman Wilt came calling (photo at left), while the celebration carried to the showers after the KU game for, from left, Gary Reimers, Bush, Jimmy Kubacki and Jim Arwood.

NU Davids Rose Up Twice To Slay Giants

First, the mighty Wilt and KU fell to Kubacki's storied shot, and then Boozer's top-ranked Kansas State was dropped in 1958 miracles.

By Jim Raglin

Once in a while the thrill returns, dredged from memories of a time past. When such recollections surface, one in particular makes the pulse quicken, the few remaining hairs bristle, the smiles sate.

After all, you had witnessed the lighthweights mauling the heavyweights. Not once, but twice!

It was a quarter century ago when the University of Nebraska basketball team accomplished a feat that has yet to achieve the national acclaim it deserves.

Twice in a row the Cornhusker cagers defeated one of the nation's top-rated teams.

Check out your Cornhusker yearbook for 1958. It's there in black and white, but to pay justice to the fierce encounters on the court, it should have been recorded in black and blue, so intense was the action.

On a brisk Saturday night, the twenty-third of February 1958, Coach Jerry Bush's battlers outplayed the nation's No. 4-rated team, the Wilt Chamberlain-led Jayhawks. The scoreboard read 43-41, but for the 8,000 of us who witnessed this miracle of the maples, it was as tense an athletic war as had ever been waged.

Consider this: less than a month before, Chamberlain and crew mutilated the same Cornhuskers in Lawrence, 102-46.

From those bitter ashes of defeat, back stormed the Huskers to triumph over Superman and his Daily Planet staff: A 56-point turn around.

That was, however, but the start of something even more wonderful. Next on the schedule was No. 1, the Kansas State Wildcats, anchored securely in the top spot of the national ratings, and led by the brilliant play of Omaha's Bob Boozer. The

Wildcats had twice before bruised the Huskers, whose record stood at 9 wins and 12 losses.

Only Bush and his courageous Cornhuskers could have possibly believed still another upset was possible.

By now you have an idea of what happened. The Wildcats were declawed 55-48 on March 3 at the Coliseum in front of 8,800 delirious fans. Wrote Del Ballek of the *Lincoln Journal*: "Jack cut down the bean stalk again Monday night."

Well, Jerry Bush did.

Kansas State was 20-1 coming into the game, and Boozer was on a tear. He scored 13 of his team's 17 first-half points (they played defense in those days, too). But the Omaha Tech graduate fouled out with 8:31 to play and Nebraska leading comfortably.

Pacing the Huskers was Wilson (Willie) Fitzpatrick of Marshall, Mo., with 19 points, including a perfect 7-for-7 from the field. As the Husker center, Fitzpatrick also contributed greatly to the victory against the Jayhawks. He stood 6-foot-7 inches tall and had the dubious distinction of guarding the 7-foot-plus Chamberlain, never the jolliest of the giants.

Guard him Willie did, resorting on occasions to tugs of Chamberlain's uniform, a technique that infuriated Wilt the Stilt.

But the hero's mantle that night was bestowed upon an unlikely player, a diminutive senior from Toledo, Ohio, named Jimmy Kubacki. Jimmy was un-

dersized even back then, standing 5-9, tops. Plus he was injured and in street clothes, sitting on the bench beside Bush as the titanic struggle developed.

Nebraska led 39-33 with just under seven minutes to play when catastrophe plagued the Cornhuskers: team captain Gary Reimers went out suffering from a severe leg cramp. That's when Bush asked the crippled Kubacki to suit up, knee brace and all.

With 2:46 remaining, Jimmy hobbled onto the court and the fans rippled the Richter scale with their cheers (but level heads were asking themselves what good could come from using a visibly wounded little guy).

Hey, Hollywood, ready for this?

The game was tied. Got that? At 41 each. Nebraska had the ball with seconds to play. Count 'em: 20, 19, 18. Down and down ran the clock until....

...that's right. Herschell Turner, destined for future brilliance, fed the ball to Jimmy and he put it up. There were two seconds left to play when the shot was launched, one-handed.

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa, and he wears RED!

Whooossssh. Kubacki's lone shot stirred the net and Nebraska won.

And grown men and women laughed and cried, and yelled and cheered, and cried some more, and hugged strangers, and wore out their shattered voices, and blistered their hands with applause, and all the other wonderful things associated with that moment when you find the basket at the end of the rainbow.

Hey, I was there and doing all those things and I was a graduate of KU!!

No person cherished the moment more than Jerry Bush. A man of monumental energy who knew the meaning of the word "gusto" long before a brewer discovered it, genial Jerry played out life at full steam ahead.

In the 24 hours following the victory, he managed two-and-one-half hours of sleep. A bear of a man from Brooklyn who had been All-American at St. John's and all-pro for good measure, Bush's courageous Cornhuskers had given him a gift that life bestows on but a few. And Jerry Bush wasn't going to sleep through the moment.

So, a salute to:

Willie Fitzpatrick, Jimmy Kubacki, Bob Harry of York, Gary Reimers of Millard, Don Smidt of Helena, Montana, Jim Arwood of Fostoria, Ohio, Tony Sharpe (Jerry's invaluable assistant) of Lincoln, and the Kid from Brooklyn.

If this season's Cornhusker cagers need an inspiration, they have only to glance back to 1958 to find it. They might even want to bring back the members of that team for a proper ceremony. Jerry Bush, who died in 1976, would love that.

GO BIG RED!



Cornhuskers

You've Got Style



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Ah, those were the days, my friend...the days of Turner Gill and Mike Rozier, Irving Fryar and Dein Steinkuhler.

Gill and Rozier, Fryar and Steinkuhler. Now they're bright images on a Nebraska highlight film, which serves not only to recruit for the future but also to verify their amazing feats.

They're bits of history, recent history, but history nonetheless.

Those four were the heart of what was arguably the most potent offense since Rutgers and Princeton played the first college football game in 1869. Nebraska fans, of course, wouldn't even argue the point.

The 1983 Cornhusker offense was the greatest. It produced the "Scoring Explosion," an NCAA single-season record 624 points.

Unfortunately, greatness at the collegiate level can be as fleeting as a four-year scholarship, as short-lived as the competitive eligibility of a few key athletes whose days are numbered.

We realize those days must end. As soon as the gun sounded to end the 1984 Orange Bowl game, college football's greatest offense was officially dismantled, its key parts, several million dollars' worth, scattering to the winds of the United States Football League, the National Football League and the Canadian Football League.

Those were special days, my friend, when points came easily, when long touchdown plays were commonplace, as plentiful as the people who come to watch and cheer on Saturday afternoons in the Nebraska autumn.

We will not see the likes of four so talented on one team again.

Still, the program which produced them remains, and new players prepare to step in...Craig Sundberg and Jeff Smith, Shane Swanson and Mark Traynowicz. Their time is at hand.

Although they're not as big or as fast or as strong as those they must replace, they have prepared well to seize the day. Whether or not they succeed, only time will tell.

Their first test comes in spring practice.

Craig Sundberg has waited four years for his chance to quarterback the Cornhuskers. He's played in Gill's shadow since both were freshmen on Nebraska's undefeated junior varsity in 1980. The former Lincoln Southeast all-stater has earned two varsity letters and paid the price. But all he's bought is a chance.

"I don't feel like all I have to do is play halfway decent and complete a few passes to get the job," Sundberg said a few days after the Orange Bowl. As the only senior, he'll get first crack at it.

"But I'm not satisfied with the way I do

some things now and I'm going to motivate myself to work hard on those things in the next six or seven months." He's taking nothing for granted.

Sundberg has Gill's size but not his speed. As a result, "I don't run the option as well," said Sundberg. His strengths are passing and poise, tempered by a knowledge of Nebraska's intricate offense.

In two varsity seasons, playing no higher than third team, Sundberg has completed 10 of 14 passes for 180 yards and two touchdowns and carried 25 times for 118 yards and four touchdowns.

Spring Will Help Erase Ghosts Of 1983

And a new cast of stars is anxious to begin creating memories of its own in 1984.

By Mike Babcock

"He has some experience. It's not like we're going in with a guy who hasn't played," Nebraska Coach Tom Osborne said. "I have confidence in Craig. He's a good quarterback. He's just going to need some time to break in and feel comfortable running the team."

Osborne obviously has prepared Sundberg with 1984 in mind. Sundberg was a redshirt when Gill went down with the leg injury which threatened his career, the week before the Oklahoma game in 1981. With Gill unable to play, Sundberg was given the opportunity to make the trip to Norman as a back-up to Mark Mauer, a move which might have jeopardized his redshirt status. He declined.

In 1982, Osborne included Sundberg, a fourth-string quarterback, on the 60-player varsity travel roster, a definite departure from tradition, and during practice, Sundberg took regular turns with the No. 1 offensive unit. "You can't spread your attention equally, but Coach Osborne does a good job. I feel like I'm being prepared as if I were going to play," Sundberg said at the time.

He was being prepared to play...in 1984.

Sundberg leaves no doubt regarding his dedication and patience, his will to succeed. He made his decision to become a Cornhusker, realizing he would have to wait his turn. People "always ask me if it's worth playing only one year," he said. "I guess it is. You only go around once, and not a lot of guys get that chance, even."

Jeff Smith, Rozier's replacement, has always been a back-up, but the I-back from Wichita, Kan., hasn't had to wait to contribute the way Sundberg has. In three seasons, including four varsity carries as a freshman, he's rushed for 1,057 yards and scored 12 touchdowns.

That hasn't been the extent of Smith's contributions. A versatile athlete, he ranked fourth in the nation in punt returns last season, averaging 13.9 yards per return.

"Jeff Smith's a pressure football player," said Nebraska offensive backs coach Frank Solich. "Every time he's gotten the opportunity, he's proved to us to be a fine back. We think without question, he'll be the kind of I-back Nebraska's always had over the years."

The Orange Bowl game provided dramatic evidence of that.

When Rozier was sidelined with an ankle injury late in the third quarter, Smith came in and scored two touchdowns in the game's final seven minutes. Time and again, he responded in critical situations.

On the 76-yard drive which pulled Nebraska to within 31-24, Smith carried five times for 34 of the yards, including a seven-yard gain on a fourth-and-one at the Miami 14-yard line. And, of course, at the end of the Cornhuskers' final touchdown drive, Smith took a pitchout

Sundberg faces big replacement job.



Paul Miles has already shown ability as a game-breaker when he gets the football.

Rozier and Smith, and Smith's experience as third-team behind Roger Craig and Rozier, illustrate the fact that Nebraska traditionally goes beyond two-deep at the critical I-back position. As a result, redshirts Doug DuBose and Thurman Hoskins also are part of the spring practice picture.

DuBose was a much-publicized multi-sport athlete from Uncasville, Conn., who led the junior varsity in rushing (309 yards) and touchdowns (6) in 1982. Because of the redshirt and some injuries, "we're anxious to see Doug go through spring practice," said Solich.

Hoskins was equally-heralded as a scholarship recruit out of Turney, Mo., but was slowed by injuries during his freshman year. He spent his redshirt season last fall on the scout squad.

According to Solich, "Thurman came through in fine fashion; he showed vast improvement. Playing with the scout squad really benefitted him. He has the toughness and the skills to be a good player."

Shane Swanson, Fryar's replacement at wingback, found himself in much the same situation as Smith last fall. Not counting his special teams responsibilities, he played more as a sophomore than as a junior.

Swanson caught 10 passes for 111 yards and rushed six times for 47 yards as a sophomore. Last fall, he caught five passes for 66 yards and one touchdown and carried three times for 25 yards.

That disparity had more to do with Fryar's talent than Swanson's lack of ability, however. "Shane's a tenacious football player. He's rugged, and he does all the right things," NU receivers coach Gene Huey said. "I liked him from the first day I saw him practicing."

Huey was coaching Swanson his second season at Nebraska. A scholarship recruit from Hershey, Neb., with a background in rodeo competition, he was a state high school champion in both steer wrestling and calf roping. Swanson didn't redshirt.

He stepped right in as Fryar's back-up, and when Fryar was sidelined for four games, Swanson became a starter. Though his :04.48 speed doesn't match Fryar's, Swanson, 5-9, 194, is in the top 10 percent of the fastest players on the team. He's also one of the most consistent performers. Huey "charted his sophomore season and of the 10 catchable balls thrown to him, he caught all 10."

"Shane's a very mature kid, one of the most mature people I've ever worked with," said Huey. "I have no doubts about

from Gill on a fourth-and-eight and raced 24 yards into the end zone.

At 5-foot-9 and 198 pounds, Smith lacks Rozier's size and power. He's also not as fast as Rozier; Smith's 40 speed is :04.58. Nevertheless, he's a breakaway threat. "Jeff's uncanny when he gets in one-on-one situations," Solich said. "He leaves people."

"He's not a power runner like Mike. His style is different, but what he accomplishes with it is the same."

Like Sundberg, Smith has worked hard and waited patiently for his opportunity to be No. 1. A *Parade* high school All-American who initially resisted spending a red-shirt season, he's gained 25 pounds and increased his speed since he arrived at Nebraska.

"He's not likely to succeed Rozier as a Heisman Trophy winner, but he'll succeed," said Solich, who coached Smith on

the junior varsity team which included Sundberg and Traynowicz. "Jeff's been very level-headed from the beginning. He deserves his time."

Smith will share that time with Paul Miles, one of the team's fastest players and another experienced running back. Miles, who's been timed at 40 yards in :04.31, carried 29 times for 281 yards and scored three touchdowns as a sophomore.

"Paul's outright speed is his biggest asset. Give him a crease, and you'd better have somebody who can really run if you're going to stay with him," Solich said. The Kansas secondary can testify to that.

Late in Nebraska's 67-13 victory over the Jayhawks, Miles broke through the center of the line and raced, unchallenged, 78 yards down the middle of the field for a touchdown.

Miles' experience as third-team behind

his capabilities. He's not blessed with the speed, size and quickness that Irving has, but there are a lot of other guys who aren't blessed with them, either.

"Irving is a great athlete, and there's no reason to compare Shane Swanson to Irving Fryar; there is no comparison. I want Shane to get the best out of his ability, and I have no reservations about that."

According to Huey, many people have the misconception that Swanson is an athlete of limited ability who succeeds only through hard work, that "he has to work for everything he gets."

Swanson works hard, but he also has athletic ability.

"We've got other kids out there who don't have his ability but who work as hard," Huey said. "Just because somebody does something effortlessly, people think he's not working as hard."

Mark Traynowicz is the most likely candidate to continue Nebraska's three-year lock on the Outland Award. Bringing a fourth trophy in a row to Lincoln would be difficult; voters might hesitate to honor yet another Cornhusker. "But the thing Mark's got is, every pro team will be wanting him," said NU offensive line coach Clete Fischer.

"There'll be no way to ignore him unless there are a lot of other truly outstanding people around. When you're the best, you ought to get recognized, and nobody's going to touch Mark at center."

Like Sundberg and Swanson, Traynowicz, 6-6 and 268 pounds, was a scholarship recruit from a Nebraska high school, Bellevue West. In the spring of his sophomore year, following the departure of Rimington, he was shifted from tackle to center. The Cornhusker coaches were determined not to make "an average center out of a good tackle."

They needn't have worried.

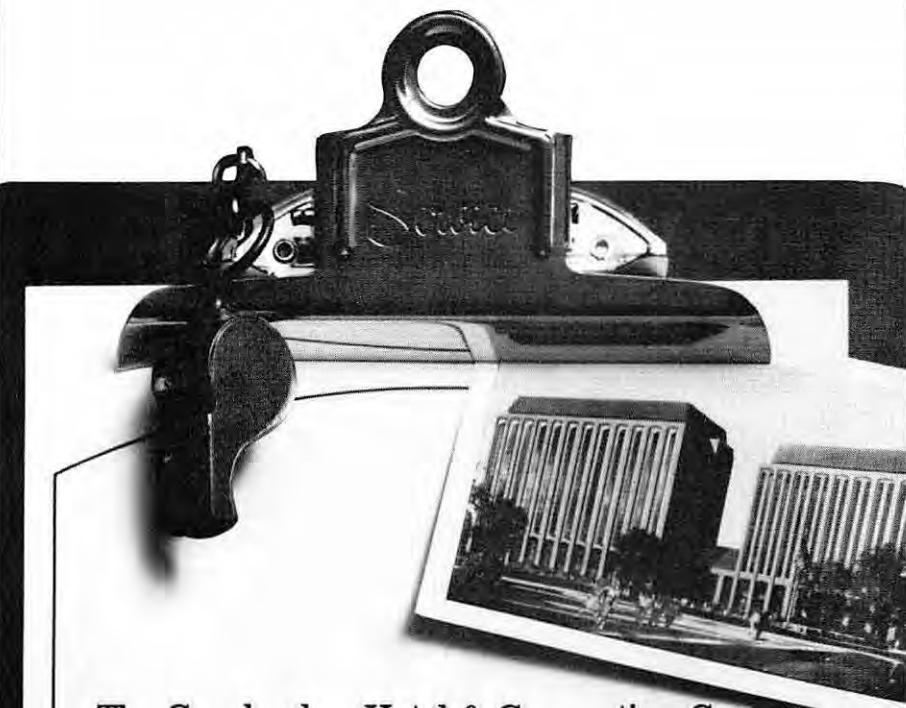
Traynowicz earned all-conference recognition in his first year at the new position. He fits the mold of Cornhusker offensive linemen, quiet, intelligent, leaders by example rather than words.

"We haven't had many rah-rah people in the line," said Fischer. "A lot of people can't understand why we're not running around, jumping up-and-down, and slapping each other. To burn up energy doing those things is not encouraged here. We don't discourage it, but we also don't coach it, either."

Fischer expects Traynowicz to be the basis for an offensive line like the ones which have helped Nebraska lead the nation in rushing the last two seasons. "Mark never loaf in practice, and he's very bright. You can go over something once, and he knows what to do."

The ease with which Traynowicz achieves his objectives is often deceptive. "You don't realize how well he's playing," Fischer said. "He has very few problems with the defense beating him."

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Fullback Tom Rathman (top) and split end Scott Kimball (lower photo) are confident they can step in and do the job.

Despite going into spring practice No. 1 at their positions, Sundberg, Smith, Swanson and Traynowicz won't be free from challenge. In Nebraska's system, there's no room for complacency, a fact emphasized by Cornhusker defensive coordinator Charlie McBride following the narrow loss to Miami in the Orange Bowl.

Even though 10 Black Shirts return, spring practice "is going to be wide open, and our players better realize it. I can't emphasize that enough," said McBride. "Any guy who goes into the spring thinking he's got it made is going to be in deep trouble.

"I'm not going to be nice about it."

According to Osborne, Nebraska's defense will be asked to carry a bigger burden next fall. "The character of our team will be different," he said. "We're going to have to win on defense."

The incumbents who approach spring practice with the right attitude will be tough to unseat, of course, but new names will emerge on the depth chart. Behind the Blackshirt secondary of All-Big Eight safety Bret Clark, cornerbacks David Burke, Neil Harris and Todd Fisher and monster back Mike McCashland, nearly 40 players will compete for positions, said defensive backs coach Bob Thornton.

Among those Thornton expects to establish themselves by the end of spring are junior Woody Paige and redshirted sophomore Bryan Siebler, both cornerbacks going into practice. Siebler or Fisher could join Clark at safety. Though small, 5-8, 170, Paige is one of the Cornhuskers best in man-to-man coverage. "Size is deterrent in one sense," Thornton said. "But Miami's defensive backs weren't all that big, and they seemed to tackle our people okay."

Among the others on the secondary three-deeps are monster backs Dan Casterline and Guy Rozier, safeties Gary Schneider and Dan Thayer, and cornerback Ricky Greene, the fastest player on the team during winter conditioning pre-tests. Greene was timed at :04.35.

Linebackers Mike Knox, an all-conference selection and honorable mention All-American, and Mark Daum will experiment with a position switch, Knox trying the strongside and Daum the weakside.

More importantly, however, "our goal is to find the six best linebackers," said veteran linebackers coach John Melton. The competition will include familiar names: Chad Daffer, Todd Proffitt, Stanley Wade and Dan McCoy, as well as freshmen Marc Munford, Kevin Parsons and Steve Forch, who could redshirt. But "we're not counting Steve out," Melton said.

"Linebacker should be a good position for us."

Sophomore Tony Holloway, who was a linebacker and special teams player last fall, will switch to defensive end in the spring, joining veteran starters Scott Strasburger and Bill Weber, and junior-to-be Brad Smith, who came on strong last season and alternated with Weber.

Scott Tucker and Gregg Reeves are among those with some experience at end, while Jeff Jamirogi and Brad Tyner will get their first shot at the varsity after starting for an undefeated junior varsity in the fall. Tyner, who will be a sophomore, is in his second season.

"One of our emphases in the spring will be to increase our efficiency against the pass," said defensive ends coach George Darlington. "We want to find some exceptional pass rushers and some exceptional pass coverage guys."

A strengthened pass rush also is the goal of McBride's defensive interior, where middle guard Ken Graeber and tackle Rob Stuckey return. Aside from those two, "I don't know how we're going to line up there," McBride said. "But we're going to have the best three players. If they're all noseguards, then that's the way it'll be."

Chris Spachman, a redshirted sophomore, and Danny Noonan, a freshman who made the varsity travel roster to Oklahoma, will have the chance to prove themselves in the spring. Tackle Jim Skow and middle guard Ken Shead have experience. Phil Rogers, another middle guard, is coming off a redshirt season. Graeber and Stuckey could find themselves playing alongside several new names during the spring.

On the offense, Tom Rathman will join Sundberg, Smith, and Swanson in the No. 1 backfield to start spring drills. The junior from Grand Island gained 143 yards on 26 carries as Mark Schellen's back-up last fall. "He's really a tough kid," said Solich.

"I feel good about having a fullback of Tom's ability. There won't be a dropoff at that position."

First behind Rathman is Scott Porter, a senior with some experience. Freshman Novell Jackson, an I-back on the junior varsity, will begin spring somewhere down the depth chart as a fullback. "We both came to an agreement about that. Novell saw that down the road, he'll be better able to contribute at fullback," Solich said.

I-back Jon Kelley, another scholarship freshman who was sidelined by an injury and received a hardship season, will go through the spring with the possibility of playing next fall with the junior varsity.

The competition behind Sundberg is wide-open and includes Travis Turner, redshirt Don Douglas, plus at least three freshmen, McCathorn Clayton, Jeff Taylor and Hendley Hawkins. Clete Blakeman, yet another scholarship quar-





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Anthony Thomas has the physical tools to be another in a long line of great Husker linemen.

260-pound junior-to-be also may learn a guard's responsibilities to enhance his chances of playing.

"Lewis is a bright football player who really came along last year," said Fischer. "He's going to play somewhere; the bad part about being the second-team center is, he's behind Traynowicz, and that's a tough place to substitute."

Tim Roth and Tom Morrow, a pair of walkon tackles, will figure prominently in the spring offensive line competition as will several newcomers, among them red-shirted freshman Stan Parker and red-shirted sophomore Rob Maggard. Fischer "is looking forward to a great spring. We've got some young kids who have worked hard during the winter so they can try to earn a spot. We're going to take a good look at a lot of people, and there are a lot of spots that are wide-open. In fact, everything's wide-open."

"That's the only reason to have spring practice," he said.

New players emerge, and old ones perform at the levels expected of them when they arrived at Nebraska, either on scholarship or as walkons. The first day of spring drills, the Cornhuskers probably will line up on offense like this: Kimball, split end; Behning and Thomas, tackles; Grimminger and Orton, guards; Traynowicz, center; Sundberg, quarterback; Smith, I-back; Swanson, wingback; and Rathman, fullback.

On defense, Nebraska will look like this: Strasburger and Weber, ends; Stuckey and Spachman, tackles; Graeber, middle guard; Knox and Daum, linebackers; Harris and Burke, cornerback; McCashland, monster back; and Clark, safety.

One day into spring drills, those lineups, no doubt, will have changed. They're bound to be different by fall.

The days of Gill and Rozier, Fryar and Steinkuhler have ended but the Cornhuskers' pursuit of a national championship has not. "I'm excited," said Sundberg. "If everybody works hard, who knows how good we can be? You don't have to score 50 points a game to be good."

"Miami's a good example of that."

terback, faces a similar situation to that of Kelley.

Aside from Swanson, wingback is equally uncertain going into the spring. The lineup includes Jim Thompson, Roger Lindstrom, redshirt Pernell Gatson, a converted quarterback, and freshman Von Sheppard.

According to Huey, the same situation exists at each of his receiving positions, wingback, split end and tight end. "After the No. 1 guy, there's not a whole lot of difference in the players behind them," he said. "Nobody's played a considerable amount."

The No. 1 split end going into spring is Scott Kimball, who alternated as a starter with Ricky Simmons, and the first-team tight end is Todd Frain, who shared time with Monte Engebretson last fall. The first players behind Kimball are Rod Yates, Jason Gamble, Rod Smith and Rob Schnitzler, a converted wingback.

Among the many players competing for positions behind Frain are Brian Hiemer, Don Bourn and Brian Moore.

"I'm going to try to be fair, so guys on the second and third teams will alternate a lot, and that includes people who have

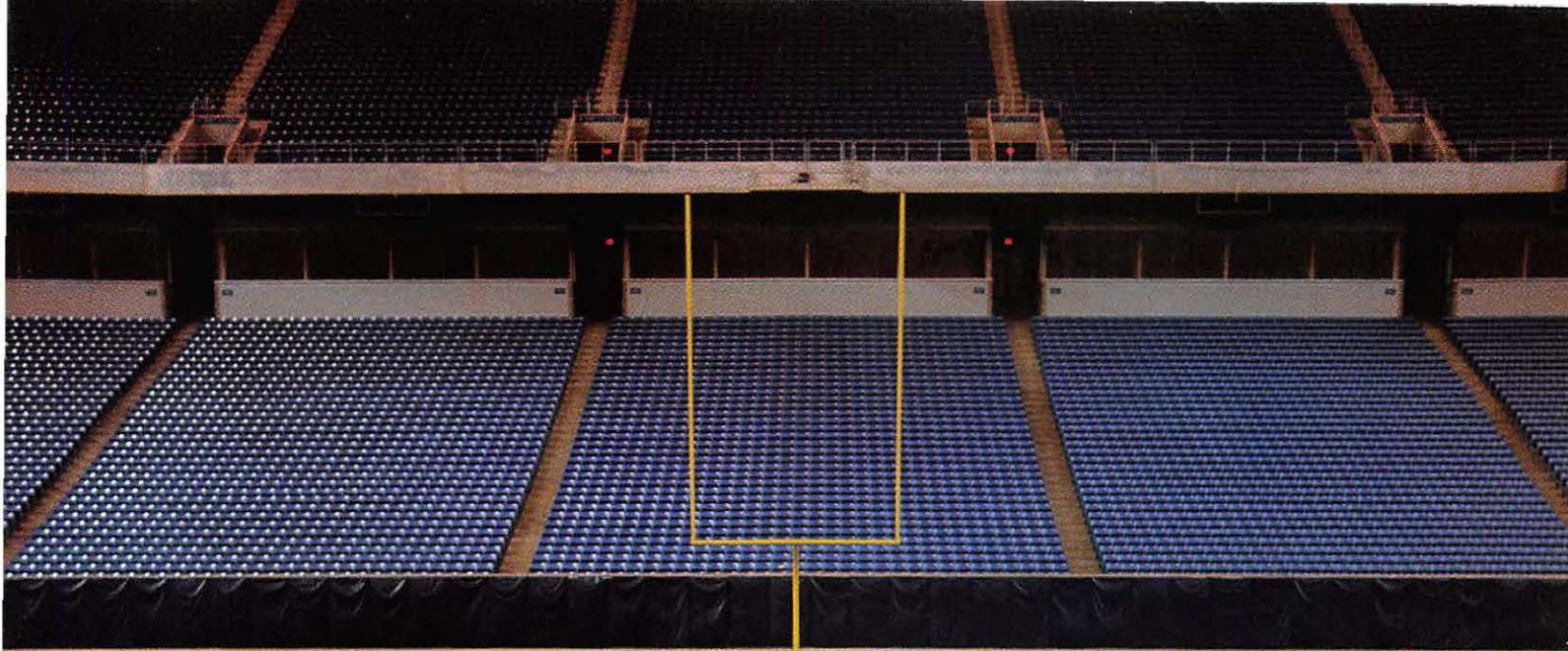
been here. Nothing is guaranteed. There may be some long faces and a lack of smiling, but that's the way she's going to be."

In the offensive line, the faces will be familiar on the left side of Traynowicz. Tackle Mark Behning, who started when John Sherlock went down with a knee injury, may be in a category with Traynowicz, said Fischer, noting: "Behning played excellent football for us last fall." Harry Grimminger also is a returning starter.

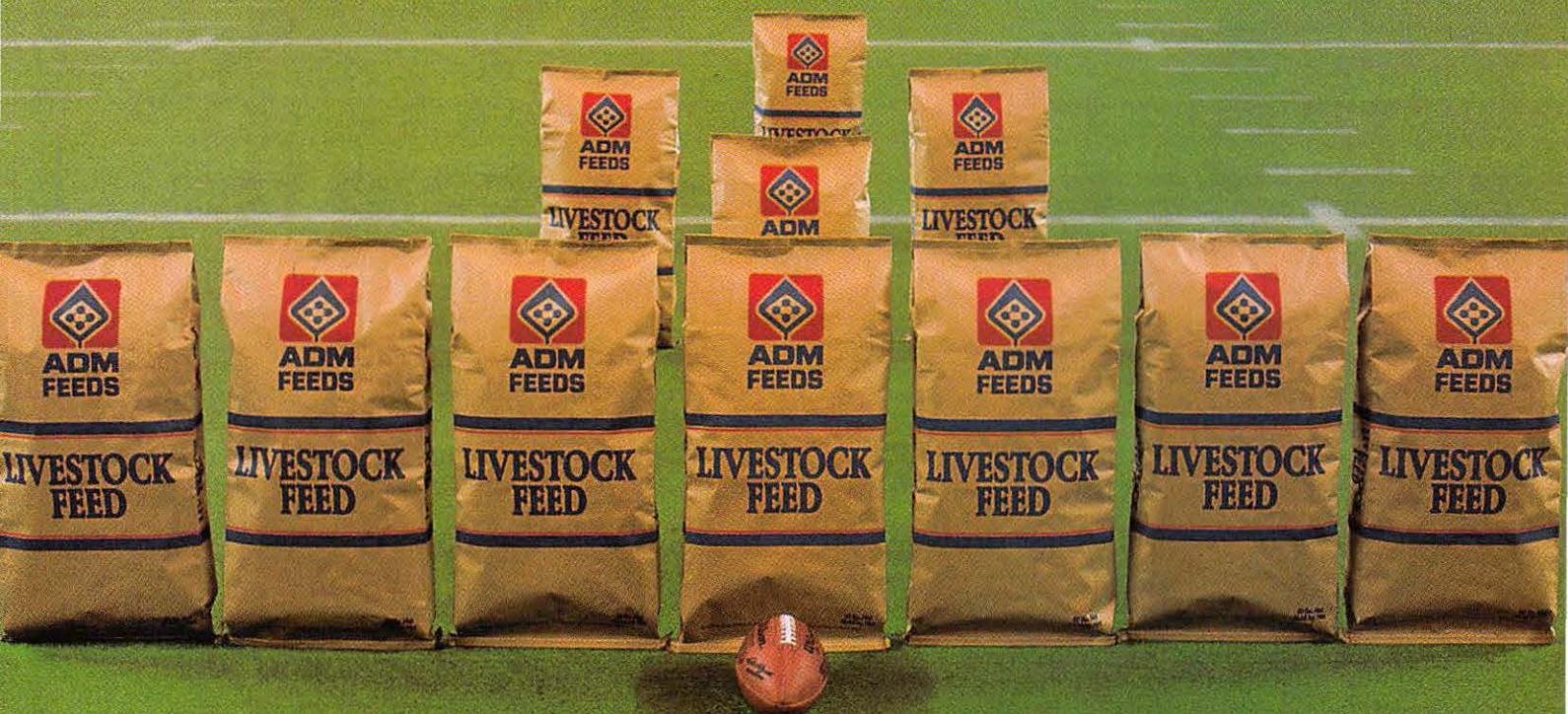
Guard Greg Orton and tackle Anthony Thomas, a converted guard, will begin the spring at the top of the depth chart on the right side of the line. The shift of Thomas "will give us size and experience that we wouldn't have otherwise," Fischer said. "He's quick; he's strong; he's got all kinds of ability. Anthony Thomas could play for anybody."

"But when you're first-team at Nebraska, you got to be able to play a full football game. And we expect the guys who are No. 1 to win."

Bill Lewis, who spent the fall as a scout squad tackle, will move back to center, the position at which he was a scholarship recruit out of Sioux City, Iowa. The 6-5,

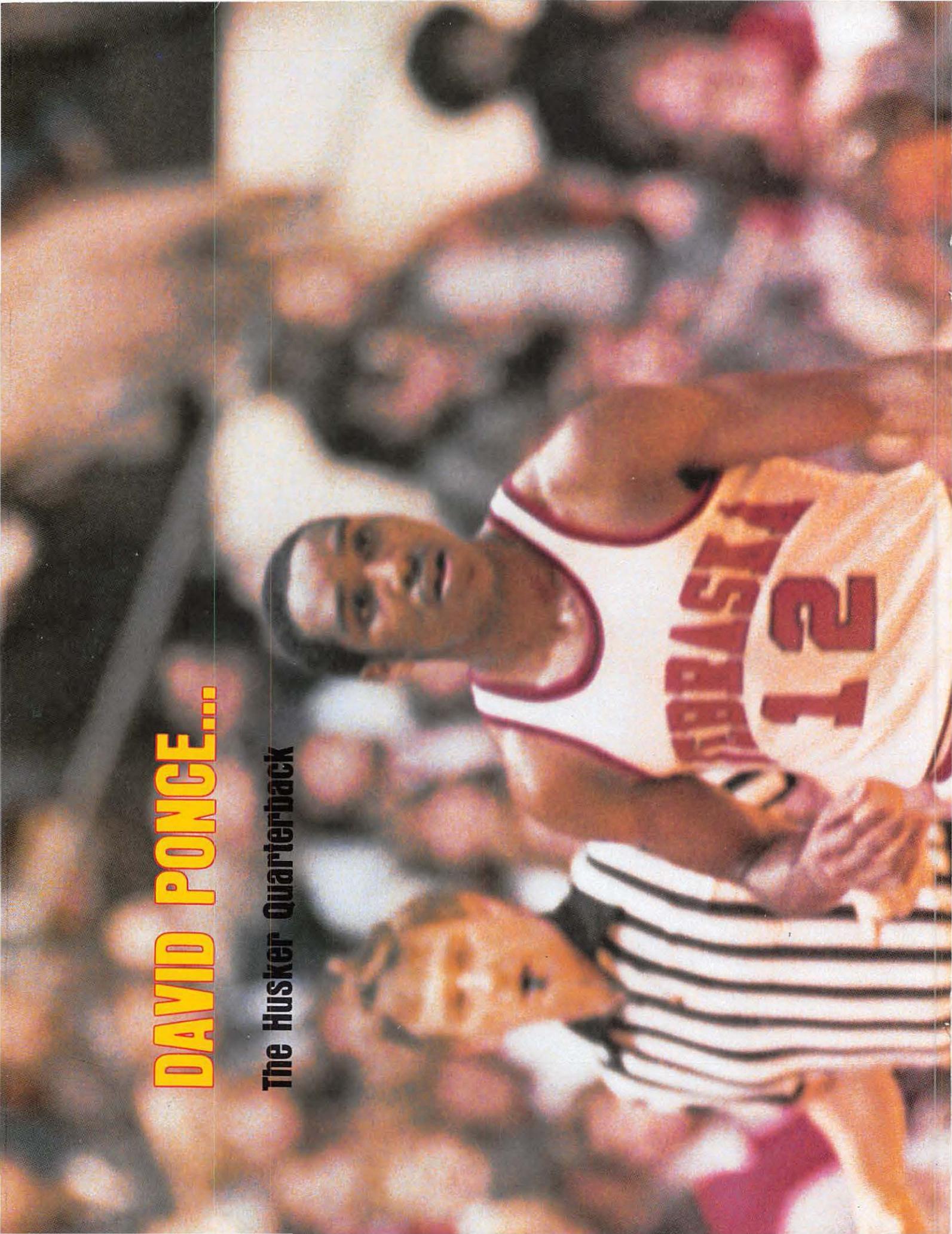


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DAVID PONGE...

The Husker Quarterback



Nebraska's football coaching staff approached recruit signing day feeling like the guy who wound up the last hour of an all-night poker game playing all runner-up hands. His straights were too promising to fold, so he kept feeding the pot, only to lose to a flush or full house.

"Because of the way things ended, I was a little discouraged," Cornhusker Recruiting Coordinator Steve Pederson said. "Things just weren't happening."

But, like the guy in the poker game who finally remembered the early hot streak and went home counting his winnings, the Husker coaches felt better when they cashed in all their blue chips. Still, what a haul it might have been! That thought persisted.

The Huskers did "exceptionally well" early, Head Coach Tom Osborne said, and just "all right" the last 10 days before the signing date, Feb. 8.

"When things happen early, you tend to forget about them," Pederson said. "Percentage-wise, there is more quality in this class than any in the country. The athletes we took, we know what they can do. These are guys who will be Big Eight football players and some will be All-Americans. If 12 of these guys turn out to be solid players, that's as many as any class."

Pederson was trying to accentuate the positive after signing day and quit kicking himself for the runner-up hands. A full week later, there was genuine excitement again in the football offices. Tyreese Knox, a running back who had set state rushing and scoring records in California, had decided to become a Cornhusker.

The day before signing day, Knox had scratched Nebraska from his list. Recruiter George Darlington refused to give up. The next day, Osborne said Nebraska's chances were "about 25 percent."

When Darlington picked up Knox's signature on a letter-of-intent, giving the Huskers 17 scholarship recruits, Pederson said, "We really ended on an upbeat note. It's a great way to end recruiting. It really makes you feel a lot better about the way things went. It just enhances the quality of the class, a great player added to other great players."

"I don't know of many other players in the country we would have waited on. We haven't had a history of doing that. George really did a great job. He hung in there. He kept his foot in the door without being a pest, and Tom kept calling, and it all worked out."

With Knox signing, Nebraska hit its target of 17 scholarships, including one that went to California split end Jason Gamble, who was recruited the year before but did not enroll until this January.

The small recruiting class was by design. Thirty scholarships are allowed, but Osborne wanted to save five to seven for walk-ons who are already in school, and

he had to keep the total scholarships within the NCAA maximum of 95.

The first dozen commitments fell into line fairly smoothly, but then Husker recruiting settled into a "holding pattern," the last week and a half before the signing date, Osborne said. There were a number of factors.

The Huskers were wooing top-of-the-line players nationally, "and they had at least four or five other schools to choose from," Osborne said. Invariably, Nebraska was in it to the wire only to get nipped. Meanwhile, second choices were making commitments elsewhere. The Huskers even suffered a rare in-state rejection when they made a late offer to Scottsbluff lineman Dean Davis, but Davis had already promised Colorado.

The dilemma: do you keep chasing the "supers", or take the "seconds" to fill up?

"You don't jump as fast with 17 scholarships as you do with 25. You slow up and wait for the player at the top of the list that you may still get," Pederson said.

Trouble was, because Nebraska was enjoying its greatest national popularity in a dozen years, more of the nation's true blue chippers were taking a closer look.

"We wanted to recruit the very best athletes anywhere in the country. We had very few of the really super players turn us down for a visit. Last year, similar players wouldn't even visit. So that was a positive sign. But we couldn't keep some of the other players on the line if we couldn't offer them a scholarship," Pederson said.

"Down to the end, it was usually the distance that hurt us. The program seemed to hold up. They'd say, 'Oh, yeh, Nebraska has the best program, but it's too far.' We feel we can sell with anybody, but

Recruiting Finished Chips, On Upbeat

There was some initial disappointment when a hot start tailed off, but then perspective and Tyreese Knox settle in.

By Tom Ash



Dana Brinson



Jason Gamble



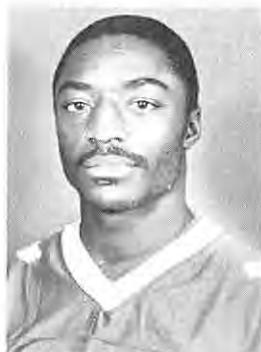
Willie Griffin



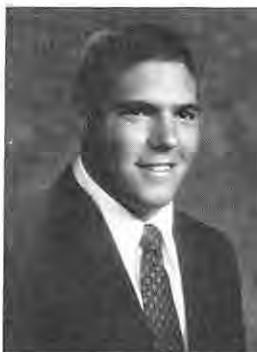
Lorenzo Hicks



Randall Jobman



Keith Jones



Andy Keeler

we can't do anything about the distance and weather."

So the Husker coaches had to scramble in the final days to fill up. Some players who had been on the back burner were moved up.

But the damage was done. Rival recruiters jumped at the opportunity. The NCAA was going to investigate Nebraska; the Huskers were going to go on probation, recruits were told.

"I don't want to make too much of this," Osborne said, "but I think it was a factor in at least two or three or four players' thinking towards the end."

"It wasn't so much what the players read in the papers as it was a few occasions where rival recruiters would get a press clipping, present it to the recruit and try to amplify and expand on what was already there and assure the player that Nebraska was going to go on probation."

Perhaps the timing was coincidental, but Nebraska's hot streak ended about the time the Rozier quote hit the wires. Suddenly, Husker recruiters found themselves backtracking and trying to reassure and hang on to the players who had already committed.

It wasn't easy. Lawrence Pete, a big lineman from Wichita, for instance, was solidly in Nebraska's camp, but he hedged and leaned toward Kansas after someone called his mother, identified himself as a *Kansas City Times* reporter and said he wanted to inform her that Nebraska was going on probation.

Pete didn't sign until the day after signing day, after Osborne flew in to join aide Charlie McBride in assuring Pete that Nebraska was in the clear and the "reporter" probably wasn't.

Osborne said it was just an unfortunate incident, and he wasn't blaming Rozier. It didn't help the cause, he said, "but I don't know if it just ruined us. I think we have a good bunch of players. If you recruit 10 and they're the right people and they all play for you, that's enough. But if you recruit 30 and a lot of them flunk out, leave or don't turn out, then it isn't enough. Who knows?"

"We'll know in two or three years whether this was a good year or not. But we suspect that it was pretty good. It may go down in history as the greatest year we've ever had, and it may go down as the poorest. We won't know until we play."

The Husker recruiters came up one lineman short of their goal, and they were

lacking a second standout running back they had wanted...until Knox reversed field. But the recruits they signed generally had exceptional speed and versatility.

All five in-state players who were originally offered scholarships decided to stay home. They were joined by speedy Scottsbluff defensive back Jamie Worden, who was initially asked to walk on.

The Nebraskans included brothers of two current Cornhusker players, one of them a breakaway runner who broke Gale Sayers' prep rushing record and displayed a complementary style to Tyreese Knox's hammering.

Also included among the Nebraskans was another eight-man product getting his big chance, a combo kicker-punter-split end who also just happened to tie for second among the nation's *all-time* leading career scorers and a four-sport Lincolnite who reminds his high school coach of current Husker star end Billy Weber.

Osborne got the one and only quarterback he wanted by going back into Texas for Wendell Wooten of LaMarque. There were the inevitable comparisons with another Texas quarterback who had some success at Nebraska, Turner Gill of Fort Worth.

Backfield Coach Frank Solich scored in the east again, landing a *Parade Magazine* All-American defensive back who committed early and never waivered.

Darlington also brought back from California the signature of a tight end who was compared to former Husker Junior Miller, and John Melton returned to traditionally fertile territory for an Iowa linebacker and a Minnesota lineman.

Jack Pierce went to the wrong game in Kansas City one night and discovered a speedster who eventually signed on as a Husker wingback candidate. Pierce also plowed some new ground in Southeastern Conference territory for a lanky lineman from New Orleans and a wingback from Valdosta, who will become the first Georgia recruit on the N.U. campus since George Haney and Archie Cobb arrived from Cobb County to play for Bill Jennings in the late '50s.

Those 17 signatures represent the remnants of an original recruiting list bear-

In The Note

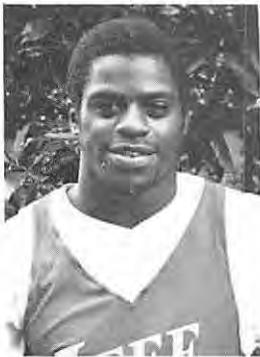
Some other hitches developed along the way. A 290-pound lineman from Tampa, Florida, John Fruhmorgen, changed his mind and opted for Alabama after making an oral commitment to Nebraska. "The only person in the last three years who made a firm commitment and announced it and backed out was John Fruhmorgen," Osborne said.

Too, Husker recruiters had to overcome the negative impact of some ill-chosen words at a crucial time by Mike Rozier, who had the nation's ear as the most celebrated Cornhusker.

Taking a break from practice with his new employer, the Pittsburgh Maulers of the USFL, Rozier was explaining to reporters how tough it was financially to be a college football player. He got by, he said, because "some people sent me money. Alumni helped out."

Oops.

The immediate assumption was that alums were slipping the Heisman Trophy winner money while he was an amateur, which would clearly violate NCAA rules. Rozier eventually explained that family and friends from home sent him some money and some Lincoln alumni occasionally had him over for dinner, both perfectly up and up.



Tyreese Knox



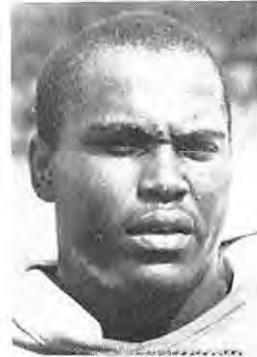
John Kroeker



Mark Mendel



Todd Millikan



Lawrence Pete

ing 600 names. "That was whittled down fairly quickly because of the job Jack Pierce did on the road during the year," said Steve Pederson, the recruiting coordinator.

Pierce, in his first year as a full-time on-the-road recruiter estimated that he visited 275 schools and evaluated "close to 400 athletes" during his travels. "I think we made some inroads in the southeast. We were close on three of their great kids down there. We turned down two others because of position needs.

"For us to go into Georgia and get a quality athlete really helps us. There are no less than 40 blue chips in Georgia this year. And they know we're there, too. There were two stories in the *Atlanta Constitution* referring to Nebraska's presence in the state," Pierce said.

Brian Washington, a defensive back from Richmond, Va., and the *Parade* All-American, led the parade. He visited Lincoln before Christmas, liked what he saw and made up his mind. He never budged after earlier looks at Ohio State and Southern Methodist.

"I told Frank Solich last spring, after watching films of him that if we got him, we'd probably be signing the best player in the country, but I didn't know what our chances would be to get a kid out of Richmond, Va.," Pederson said. "He visits and says he wants to come."

Two days after the Orange Bowl game, Osborne stopped in Valdosta, Ga., and got the good word from Dana Brinson, who had called the Huskers the year before. "He's one of the most explosive I've ever seen as a wingback and return man," Pederson said.

The next weekend, Lorenzo Hicks (Kansas City wingback) visits. It was the worst weekend. The students were out of school, and we only had four recruits in. Neil Harris (NU cornerback) did a great job as his host.

"If you would have told me in November that we'd get Washington and Hicks, I'd have said it would be a great year no matter what else happened. We hadn't even got to our two big weekends, and it looked like we were going through the sky," Pederson said.

Then Nebraskans Randall Jobman, John Kroeker and Steve Stanard quickly fell into line. "By Jan. 15, things were really moving," Pederson said.

Heading into the big-push weekend that would feature the Big Eight championship banquet, the Huskers had eight firm commitments. They brought in 34 recruits. They landed three. The year before, they batted 13x29 under similar circumstances.

Omaha Burke lineman Andy Keeler and Shenandoah, Iowa linebacker Todd Millikan made up their minds that weekend, and Osborne flew back to LaMarque, Tex., with Wendell Wooten and picked up his promise the next day.

In the last 10 days, however, of those with standing offers, only Omaha Central running back Keith Jones and Wichita's Pete came through, and then Pete had second thoughts.

And so the scramble was on. Monrovia, Calif., tight end Willie Griffin, Minnesota offensive lineman Mark Mendel, New Orleans defensive lineman Neil Smith and Scottsbluff's Worden, who formerly was on the walk-on list, came aboard.

When Osborne met the press the day after signing day, he said it would have been nice to have landed another lineman and another running back.

Pederson said: "We got the best back in Nebraska in a lot of years. We could have got a lot of good backs, but we wanted another great one. We have good backs in our program already.

"I don't personally feel like it was a great loss not signing another back. Sometimes there's an ego thing in college football to sign a great running back. That's accentuated by the newspapers."

A week later, Tyreese Knox came through to boost the Huskers' ego.

A closer look at the 1984 Nebraska Recruiting Class:

I-back

Keith Jones (5-10, 180), Omaha Central—Has 4.5 speed in 40...gained 1,710 yards to break Gale Sayers' school record, 18 touchdowns, 9.1 yards avg. per carry...brother, Lee, is a Husker freshman defensive tackle...turned down Iowa State, Kansas State and Louisiana State...gained 235 yards in 28-26 loss to state champion Creighton Prep and 216 in 7-6 loss to state runner-up Omaha

Gross...great in open field, but some rival prep coaches questioned inside power.

Tom Jaworski, Creighton Prep coach, played against Gale Sayers and coached against Jones. "Both were fabulous high school players. Gale was more physical. I remember him more as a linebacker. You can't compare them; it's a long way down the road for Keith. He ran hard and hit hard against us. Can he withstand the punishment? I suspect he will."

"We won the game against Central, but Keith gained more yards against us than any player in the 11 years I've been coaching here. Give him any room, and nobody can catch him. He has a tremendous future."

Gross Coach Stan Macaitis said Jones is "truly a premier athlete. His skills are suited for the open field. He was out of our game a couple of times with a bad ankle. I was glad to see him out."

Gross won by holding Central to a fourth and short yardage situation in the final moments. A field goal try failed. "If Keith had been in there on that drive, they'd never have been in a fourth-down situation, and we'd have lost," Macaitis said.

Nebraskan Clete Fischer said, "No back in the country has better credentials. How many backs break Gale Sayers' records? Put him anywhere else in the country, and we'd all be chasing him."

"A lot of guys are playing pro ball now at 190 pounds, and he'll be 190 when he gets here."

Tyreese Knox (6-0, 208) Daly City, Calif., Jefferson—Broke Dick Bass's California high school career records for rushing and scoring with 5,214 yards and 78 touchdowns...4.5 speed...carried 28 to 35 times a game last year for 8-2 team...averaged over 7 yards...gained 1,994 yards and scored 30 touchdowns despite missing 2½ games...Ran 9.9-second 100 as freshman at Serra Monte before school closed and hasn't run track since...will play baseball this spring...started three years in basketball...Mew Harris, *San Francisco Examiner* prep writer, says Knox has two speeds: "Fast and oh, my God, he scored again."

Knox eliminated Nebraska from his thinking at one point and had it down to Utah and Arizona State. ASU was eliminated after signing six running backs, and George Darlington stayed with it and signed him a week late.

"Tyreese was just lying back and seeing where they were coming from. What sold him was that Nebraska was straight-arrow with him," Jefferson Coach Ron Fassler said.

"I'm glad they closed that other school. In the games he missed last year, the backs who took over had a great day. Tyreese would have been



Neil Smith



Steve Stanard



Brian Washington



Wendell Wooten



Jamie Worden

fantastic. If he had played all of them, I really believe he would have gained 2,500 yards and scored 40 touchdowns.

"He gets the ball in the end zone. He's run back punts and kickoffs for touchdowns in his career. He caught 20 passes as a sophomore, he played outside linebacker as a junior and safety as a senior. He ran back two interceptions for touchdowns. He has a great vertical jump. He got 28 rebounds in one basketball game. He even punted for us as a junior. He can do anything he wants to do."

"If Tyreese Knox never plays another day of offense, he would be a great defensive player. He'll make his mark one way or the other," Fasler said.

Quarterback

Wendell Wooten (6-2, 190), LaMarque, Tex. — Ran for 275 yards (4.4 avg.) and 5 touchdowns...passed for 450 and 3 TDs...kicked 12 PATs and 1 FG for 6-4 team in largest Texas class...4.5 speed...recruited as db by Texas, also turned down Texas A&M, Texas Tech, Arkansas and Oklahoma State...ranked 30th academically in a class of 400...missed three games with ankle injury, and LaMarque lost all three...Coach Hugh Massey attended same Fort Worth school as three-year Husker QB Turner Gill and said, "I saw him when he was there, and Wendell Wooten is a whole lot like Turner Gill."

There was some surprise along the Gulf Coast that Nebraska went so strong for a quarterback who ranked ninth among 10 passers in the district (.312 completion percentage and seven interceptions), but Tom Osborne studied films of 15 of the nation's top quarterbacks and saw enough latent talent that Wooten was the only quarterback he offered.

LaMarque runs a Nebraska-style offense, and its coaches asked Husker assistant Milt Tenopir to evaluate film at a clinic last year at San Angelo State. "The thing I liked about Wendell was that he was doing things like our quarterbacks do," Tenopir said. "A lot of times you have to project whether a kid can run options or throw sprint-out passes, and he was doing them. His leadership, stability and alertness really came across."

"You shouldn't compare, but he has many similarities to Turner Gill. He was the leading hitter in the district as a centerfielder in baseball, and he has as quick a release as you'll see, a slingshot for an arm. They didn't rely on the pass much. They mix it in, but he's accurate."

Wingback/Split End

Dana Brinson (5-10, 175), Valdosta, Ga. — Gained 954 yards (6-yard avg.) and over 500 receiving as halfback on 11-1 team that went 37-

3 in three years as starter...wingback as sophomore...visited Iowa State, turned down Florida and Florida State...scored 15 touchdowns, 6 receiving, 3 punt returns for touchdowns in one game.

Brinson was instrumental in two regional championships and one state championship in three years. His school will play for its 700th victory in eight years in next year's opener. Coach Nick Hyder has produced 14 major college scholarships in last four years, including quarterbacks Buck Belue and John Lastinger at Georgia and John Bond at Mississippi State.

Georgia didn't recruit Brinson. "Georgia's the Woody Hayes-type offense," Hyder said. "They're three-yards-and-cloud-of-dust people down here. They don't want a multi-purpose back. Dana only weighed 165 for us, but he hits like 210. He's even-tempered and hard-nosed."

"He might have gained 3,000 yards if we kept playing him, but we play a lot of people. We scored 466 points. We're like Nebraska. We like to score."

Brinson contacted Nebraska last year and said he was interested in playing for the Cornhuskers. He liked the way Nebraska used its wingbacks, based on what he'd seen on TV, and his weight coach was an admirer of Boyd Epley's Husker strength program.

Lorenzo Hicks (6-1, 180), Kansas City Southeast — A 4.4 burner for 40 yards...a "find"...didn't make all-state or even all-Metro...caught 38 passes for 560 yards as wingback and intercepted 10 passes as safety for 8-2 team...had 87-yard kickoff return TD and 79-yarder on punt return...will get first look at wingback...rejected Missouri.

Jack Pierce credits Steve Pederson with an assist in discovering Hicks. Pierce was dispatched to a K.C. stadium to watch North High play one night and found himself watching Southeast-Westport. "Hicks was catching passes, returning punts, running reverses. Of all the kids I saw, Lorenzo may be the best athlete," Pierce said.

Charlie McBride, who recruited the area, quickly agreed. "He's the best athlete I've seen in Kansas City in the seven years I've recruited there," he said.

Hicks didn't get the recognition, McBride said, because "the Kansas City schools don't get quite the traffic some schools get, and he probably didn't have the stats some other kids had. But we were able to do a more thorough job recruiting this year. We were able to see him practice as well as play."

"I saw him play basketball one night, and he was the best athlete I've seen on a basketball floor, as far as quickness, in 20 years of recruiting."

Jason Gamble (6-1, 171), Santa Barbara, Calif. — Was a member of the 1983 Husker recruiting class, but he was too late for a scholarship...moved to Lincoln last fall and worked until enrolling in January...caught 45 passes for 886 yards and eight TDs, returned two kickoffs and one punt for TDs...turned down Arizona, ASU and Nevada-Las Vegas for a delayed chance at Nebraska...high game was eight receptions for 201 yards and a 47-yard game-winner...prep Coach Manuel Garcia says he's best athlete his school has seen.

John Kroeker (6-0, 180), Henderson — Nebraska all-stater at three positions — I-back, punter, kicker...will get shot at split end as well as combination kicking...led 13-0 team with 1,895 yards and 42 TDs...averaged 46.8 yards on 35 punts, hit 5 of 7 field goals kicking soccer style...four-year career for Class C-2 school produced 672 points, giving him tie for second in the nation on all-time career scoring chart, trailing only the 899 by Ken Hall of Sugarland, Tex., in 1953...attended Husker football school 3.97 student.

"He's got a chance to be a great punter because he's so quick, a two-stepper. Whenever a game was important, that's when he was best. Obviously, he's a great competitor," Husker assistant coach Clete Fischer said.

"We looked at about six of the so-called premier kickers and punters in the country, from California to Florida, and he was the best of the bunch. I watched him just kick for an hour one day, and it wasn't a hard decision after that," Jack Pierce said. "He's going to win some games for you just because of the way he gets the ball in the air. He's like Ray Guy in a lot of other ways because he's a great athlete, too."

Tight End

Willie Griffin (6-4, 230), Monrovia, Calif. — Lineman of year in San Gabriel Valley...three-year starter at defensive end, but was recruited as tight end...caught 25 passes for over 400 yards at latter position and was instrumental as blocker in leading an I-back who scored 27 TDs...4.8 speed...center on basketball team...Washington was main competition...also turned down Nevada-Las Vegas and New Mexico State.

Griffin played on a 20-1 team in a summer passing league in California (seven on seven, all-pass offenses), "so, obviously, he's caught a lot of passes," George Darlington said.

Former Husker L. C. Cole, who recruited him for New Mexico State, calls Griffin "junior junior," in comparing him with former NU tight end Junior Miller, now with the Atlanta Falcons. "I don't think he has as much speed out of high school as Junior," Darlington said, "but he's a little quicker."

Linebacker/Defensive End

Randall Jobman (6-4, 205), Oshkosh Garden County — Played I-back, tight end, linebacker, wherever he was needed for eight-man power...team was ranked No. 1 in state through season until he was lost with knee injury. Garden County then lost, 28-20, to Hay Springs and playoff game to Beemer, 56-6...Injury was concern until he returned for basketball season.

"If Randall had been there, there's no question we would have won the Hay Springs game, and we'd have battled Beemer to the end," prep coach Doug Leopold said. "He made a big difference, especially on defense. He's more than an athlete to me; he's one of those special kids who come along."

Jack Pierce stopped by practice one day. "When they needed a tight end, they'd put him there. When they wanted to score, they'd put him at I-back, and he'd score. When they wanted to stop the ball, they'd put him at linebacker, and he'd stop 'em. He's an athlete."

Clete Fischer said, "I've never been too concerned about eight-man players. I played six-man at St. Edward. You have to be a better open-field tackler to be any good at that game, and this is the thing he did very well."

Todd Millikan (6-3, 215), Shenandoah, Iowa — Tight end and defensive end in high school... Nebraska's top recruit in Iowa from the start. Turned down Iowa, Iowa State and Notre Dame, visited Oklahoma, but nixed a trip to Texas...attended NU football camp...averaged about 20 points in basketball. Iowa wanted him as a tight end, Texas as a linebacker and Oklahoma State as a baseball pitcher after 19-2 record in two years...premier 400-meter hurdler in track.

"He's the one we wanted in Iowa because he can play so many positions — tight end, linebacker, defensive end, monster," NU recruiter John Melton said.

"We used him as a defensive end as a sophomore and outside linebacker as a junior. As a senior, everybody ran away from him, so we moved him to middle linebacker," Shenandoah Coach Don Strange said.

"He was a halfback or flanker on offense and just destroyed defensive ends as a blocker. He just runs over people. When we needed a first down on short yardage, we went to him."

Steve Stanard (6-0, 205), Lincoln Southeast — Leading rusher and scorer with 650 yards and nine TDs and linebacker with five interceptions...4.55 speed with 325 bench press...four-sport athlete...outstanding swimmer as junior before switching to basketball and leading team as center...attended NU camp and wasn't interested in any other school after Huskers offered.

"Any kid who can switch from swimming to basketball and be good at both, that's something. Plus, he's the best football player in the city," Pierce said. "He's a Billy Weber (Southwest grad and regular NU defensive end)-type kid, good football sense."

"I coached Weber his senior year, and Steve's like him in that both are highly motivated people. They have tremendous drive," Southwest Coach Chuck Mizerski said. "I coached in the St. Louis metropolitan area, and if he had played there, he would have been recruited by Missouri, Illinois, Notre Dame. All those people would have been all over him. He's as good as any of them."

Defensive Back

Brian Washington (6-2, 205), Richmond, Va., Highland Springs — Most recognized Husker recruit nationally...named to prestigious *Parade Magazine* All-America team...4.4 flyer...over 400 pounds bench press...37-inch vertical jump...missed last half of season with knee injury, but didn't lose popularity with recruiters...visited Ohio State and SMU before Nebraska, then cancelled remaining trips...Eastern recruiter Frank Solich watched him play when Nebraska was in the area for the Kickoff Classic against Penn State.

"We knew about him for a long time. We had looked at a tight end at his school the year before, and we knew we'd be back. He was on everybody's list," Solich said.

"He was a cornerback a couple of years, and last season they put him at strong safety for run support. In their scheme, he was almost a third linebacker. He can play any of the three secondary spots.

"He was a pretty good I-back, too, but he wants to play defense."

"I think he can play early. He's big enough. He might have to play early," Line Coach Clete Fischer said.

"Mike was better at some things, and Andy is better at some things. I hate to compare," Burke Coach Larry Jacobsen said. "He's the only kid we've had who comes off the ball at the same level. Most want to stand up with their first step. That's what you look for in an offensive lineman."

"You always hear about the blue chippers from California and everywhere else, but he's as good as there is. Iowa State said they looked at a lot of film from all over, and they said he was the best they saw."

Lawrence Pete (6-3, 260), Wichita, Kan., South — Played middle guard as a junior and offensive and defensive tackle as a senior...projected as middle guard at NU...435 bench press...58-foot shotputter...has won several power lifting contests in Kansas and Oklahoma...strongest lineman Husker coaches saw during recruiting...missed three games and didn't make all-city in Wichita, but recruiters from the Kansas schools, Minnesota, Tennessee and Arkansas wanted him...13 brothers and sisters.

"The most unbelievable thing I've ever seen is his not making all-city," Charlie McBride said. "They must have a different way of voting. There was no better lineman in Wichita or in the state, I'll tell you that."

"He knows he won't come in and take over the world. He has a lot of work to do, but he has a chance to play as a freshman. He's listed at 260, but he's up to 280 now."

Neil Smith (6-6, 230), New Orleans, La., McDonogh 35 — Perhaps the "sleeper" of the recruiting class...excellent 4.7 speed...projected for defensive line...recruited by Grambling, Southern, Florida A&M.

"He's got excellent growth potential and exceptional feet for a guy that tall," Charlie McBride said.

Osborne and Pierce were watching film of New Orleans quarterback Alij Tapp, Pierce said, "and this No. 81 kept showing up all over the place at defensive tackle. We called the coach and asked who he was and who was recruiting him. No. 81, of course, was Smith."

"When Neil came up for a visit, his mother, Lutitia, paid her own way and came along. Neither one of them had ever flown before. They loved it. If we ever need an advertisement in New Orleans, Mrs. Smith is it. She was overjoyed with the whole deal," Pierce said.

Mark Mendel (6-3, 230), Plymouth, Minn., Wayzata — Played outside linebacker and offensive guard for 6-3 team...All-Lakes Conference (big schools in suburban Minneapolis) and consensus all-stater...will be given trial at middle guard and offensive guard...4.6 speed...top open 100-meter sprinter at Wayzata...second in state discus last year and will be one of top shotputters in state this spring...avid weightlifter...wanted to go to Nebraska all along but had decided on Indiana until Huskers made late offer...Brigham Young recruited him as a fullback.

"We liked his speed and agility, but the thing that caught my attention was when I heard he anchored their 4x100 relay team," John Melton, the veteran Minnesota recruiter said.

"Mark's a rare athlete, a great prospect. He'll be one of the fastest linemen Nebraska has ever seen," Wayzata Coach Roger Lipelt said.

'Percentage-wise, there is more quality in this class than any in the country. The athletes we took, we know what they can do.' — Steve Pederson, Recruiting Coordinator.

Jamie Worden (5-11, 175), Scottsbluff — Played wingback and defensive back for former Husker tight end Brad Jenkins...second in state 200 dash, third in 100, fourth in 400 despite bronchitis...Nebraska originally asked to walk on but probably would have accepted scholarship to Wyoming or South Dakota State.

"We always thought Jamie was a good athlete, but we had never seen him play much defensive back. So we had to look at other defensive backs first," Steve Pederson said.

"Naturally I'm biased," said ex-Husker Jenkins, "but I'm convinced he can play in the Big Eight. He kept his weight at 165 for track, and as soon as he eats, he's 175. He can easily go to 195. He's a legitimate 4.5 40."

Line

Andy Keeler (6-3, 255), Omaha Burke — Brother of 1983 Husker defensive tackle and captain Mike Keeler...played both ways but prefers offensive line because of chance to play as true soph...tried wrestling and track early in high school but then stuck to football...visited Iowa State, K-State and Minnesota, cancelled LSU, turned down Oklahoma...NU football camper.



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Once upon a time, and it wasn't all that long ago, a 12-year-old boy in Cupertino, Calif., took his hard-earned money and went to a local fireworks stand. When he got there, he surveyed the merchandise and started asking questions. Not only did he want to know the price of each item, he also wanted to know what each item was going to do once ignited.

The boy was as persistent as the proprietor was patient. But after awhile, enough was enough. "Look," said the man used to more impulsive buyers, "I'll give you a whole bag of fireworks, if you'll just leave me alone and let me take care of my other customers."

Sandra Ponce still laughs at that story about her little boy, David Ponce, the senior point guard, floor general and last-

second shot hero on Nebraska's basketball team.

"He came home with an 88-piece bag of fireworks and all his money," she said.

"That story is really representative of David," offered Richard Ponce, his step-father. "He was so analytical, even when he was a little kid."

Richard, a personnel specialist for IBM, has been David's father for 14 years. "But I can't take credit for his character," he said. "As parents, we acted more as guides than directors. David's strong drive and strong character was always there. You didn't have to build it."

Sandra Ponce thinks she knows why. "I love my kids very much," she said. "When we moved from Washington D.C. to California, we didn't need a lot of money.

We just needed a lot of love. We made sure every day was a positive day in our house."

Sandra Ponce was willing to sacrifice for the sake of her children. "I couldn't afford it, but I had David in a private school in Washington," she said. Finally, when he was 8 and his sister, Kimm, was 6, "I decided I wanted a better life and better schools for them," she said. "We got on an airplane with \$200 in our pocket and flew to my sister's in Santa Barbara."

After making that courageously dramatic move, everything fell into place. David had shot a basketball through a peach basket in Washington D.C., but he'd never known the thrill of playing organized sports.

"My stepfather was my first coach," he said. "We had a team called the Bulls at the Santa Barbara Boys' Club. I played everything — football, basketball, baseball, soccer, wrestling."

You name it, David Ponce excelled in it.

"When David was in the seventh grade, he finished fourth in the Northern California junior high wrestling championships," reported his stepfather. "When he was an eighth-grader, he was the 95-pound Northern California champion."

At San Jose's Mt. Pleasant High School, little David Ponce was the starting center-fielder on the varsity baseball team as a sophomore. He was also the starting halfback on the varsity football team as a sophomore.



Ponce Into Role

Senior Ponce has been unrelenting on defense and a shooter when asked to, Iba's ideal role player.

"I had a good career in football," he said. "I even had an offer to play at Santa Clara."

But by then, David Ponce knew what he wanted to do — play college basketball. He'd been a starter on a high school team that won its first 27 games and finished 33-3.

"But I wasn't heavily recruited," Ponce said. "The only offer I got was Seattle Pacific University. The coach got fired and didn't tell me. I had to read about it in the paper. By then, it was too late to investigate any other scholarship possibilities."

Fortunately, Ponce knew an assistant coach at the University of Portland. "He told me they were low on good players and talked me into walking on," Ponce recalled. The idea scared the athlete. "I knew I wanted to go to college," Ponce said. "I didn't know where, I didn't know how and I didn't know how I was going to pay for it."

"But my mother always told me to do things, not worry about them. And my father told me you make your own luck. So I sold my Pinto and paid for my first semester of school."

It didn't take Ponce long to impress the University of Portland coaching staff. Quicker than you can say "Snap, Crackle, Ponce," he had a scholarship for the second semester.

"I didn't start, but I was the first guard off the bench," he said. "I came off the bench against Portland State and made a last-second shot to win the game."

As Nebraska fans know, last-second shots have become Ponce's speciality. In December, his last-second shot beat Wisconsin in overtime. The same thing happened in overtime against Oklahoma State in January. Naturally, Ponce is glad he had the courage to move to a higher level of basketball.

"I was happy at the University of Portland," he said. "But both guards were coming back the next year and I wanted to start. I also wanted to wind up at a bigger school."

So Ponce took another calculated gamble. He accepted a scholarship at North Idaho Junior College in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho.

"I had a good buddy, Warren Shepard, who was our center in high school," Ponce said. "He was at North Idaho and kept telling me how much they needed a guard like me. I saw no chance of advancing at Portland, so I followed his advice."

David Ponce, in effect, made his own luck. He was willing to be the basketball version of a gypsy to earn a scholarship at a big-name school. After an outstanding season on an outstanding junior college team, Ponce had several choices. The two he liked the most were Nebraska and Idaho. Both schools recruited him hard. Both schools considered him a solution to their backcourt problems.

Realistically, Ponce probably should have gone to Idaho. After all, it was just coming off a top 10 finish in the final major

college basketball ratings. Nebraska wasn't coming off anything. But, again, David Ponce followed his instincts. And again, he came out smelling like a rose.

His impact was immediate. While Dave Hoppen and Stan Cloudy scored the points and got the headlines, he glued it all together. Nebraska shocked everyone by advancing to the NIT Final Four.

But Ponce hardly shocked himself. He had this habit of winning and playing hard, a habit that was developed in his junior high days in Cupertino.

"We had a basket out in front of my house," he recalled. "We played one-on-one all the time. We had lamps and spotlights set up, so sometimes we played until 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning. The only time we'd come in the house was to go to the bathroom or get a drink of water."

Ponce's two closest friends, Keith Richardson and Ricky Lewis, were his constant companions.

"We had some great ratball games in California," he said. "The competition was unbelievable. We knew all of each other's moves, strengths and weaknesses. We played on the same high school team."

Ironically, Ponce's family moved to San Jose before the best friends' senior year. Ponce wound up at Mt. Pleasant High School. Richardson and Lewis attended Silver Creek, "our biggest rival," Ponce said.

"I'll never forget that game our senior year," Ponce said. "They shot 80 percent from the field in the first half and had us 18 points down at halftime. But we came back and won. Thirty years from now, we'll be telling our grandkids about that game."

All three friends received major college basketball scholarships. Keith Richardson attends San Jose State. Ricky Lewis plays for Stanford despite two shoulder operations.

"Everyone predicted Ricky would get a scholarship first and he did," Ponce said. "He was a good defensive player."

Even though Ponce is considered the quickest player in the Big Eight Conference, "Keith was quicker than I was," he admitted. "We always had races, even in the summer. I attribute a lot of my success to Keith. To this day, I don't know who's quicker because we pushed each other so much."

"The only thing I regret about high school is not graduating with Keith and Ricky," Ponce admitted. "We were really close. We still are. We call each other and keep track of each other all the time."

Sandra Ponce is not surprised. She describes her son as very sentimental and very sensitive. And David pleads guilty on both counts.

"I still remember the day I left for Portland," he said. "I'd never been away from my mother or my sister. My father drove me down there and my sister started cry-

Parlays Persistence As Husker Starter

Things have never come easy for this 5-foot-9 youngster. But plenty of love from his family, a lot of confidence in himself and a bulldog attitude have now paid dividends.

By Randy York

ing the day we left. It was like I was going off to war. From time to time, I still think about that day. It was one of the most touching experiences of my life."

Yes, Kimm Ponce remembers that same day. "David and I are very close," she said. "When we first came to California, it was just me, mom and David. I don't know what my mother told him when we were little. But he always looked after me and always took care of me."

"David was like another father figure to me," Kimm said. "Whenever I needed him, he was always there. He helped raise me. He's the dearest brother anyone could ever have. If I find a man like David, I'll marry him."

Kimm, now 20, attends school full time at West Valley College in Saratoga, Calif., and works part time in a furniture store. "David still sends me cards," she said. "He never forgets a birthday or a holiday. He's always slipping in a \$20 bill or a nice sweat suit or something like that. He's my heart, my big brother."

That big brother, though, "watched over me like a hawk when I started dat-

ing," Kimm recalled. "Whenever I had a problem, he'd get a boy straight. He'd tell me when someone was no good and he was always right. He knows how to treat a lady. He's got a dynamite personality."

His mother thinks that sensitivity for women was rooted when he was little. "When I was single, he was the man of the house," she said. "When Richard came over, David wanted to know who he was, why he was there and what his intentions were."

David Ponce gives Richard Ponce equal credit in his development to maturity. "He taught by principle," David said. "I saw the importance of courtesy and common sense. My mother and father have inspired me to do what I've done, in sports and out of sports."

Ponce is serious about basketball. But he is even more serious about his degree in business. Paul Miles, Nebraska's future I-back star in football, is Ponce's roommate. He said Ponce's personality meshed with his the first time they met.

"He's the best roommate you can have," said Miles, who visits NU's basketball

locker room just like Ponce visited the Huskers' football locker room. "After living with David one month, my study habits got a lot better. He's so disciplined. He leads by example, just like he does on the court."

Ponce says the feeling is mutual. "I'm glad I inspire Paul because he inspires me," David said. "He reminds me of Keith. Once a friend, he's a friend for life."

Ponce, though, insists there are other reasons for his positive vibrations. "I have more faith in myself because I have more faith in the Lord," he said. "The Lord has given me my great sense of self confidence."

To Ponce, sharing is caring. "I can't walk by a card store without buying one for my sister," he said. "And when I go home, I give everything I have with Nebraska on it to my buddies. They put me on a pedestal. It's my way of paying them back."

Ponce has a genuine concern for anyone and everyone around him.

"I don't know if I should share this story. But it really tells me a lot about what kind of kid I raised," Sandra Ponce said. Last year, when Nebraska upset Oklahoma in basketball, "there was a big blizzard in Lincoln," Sandra said. "There were a lot of little black kids waiting outside the locker room to get David's autograph."

"I'd rented a car, but I went home with David's Lincoln parents. It took David awhile to get home. I thought he'd taken a bunch of players home in my car. But he'd found out those little kids had walked to the game, so he took each one of them to his own house. That kid has a soft spot in his heart."

Maybe it's because his mother had such a soft spot for him. "I've always told David that if Nate Archibald can play basketball, he could play basketball. There's always room for the little guy in any sport."

And David, 5-foot-9, has always believed it.

"I was lucky. I had the support and consent of my parents," he said. "I guess that's why I'm so sensitive when it comes to children. I want to give them that same kind of support."

"If I had a lot of money, I'd start a Boys' Club in San Jose or Washington D.C.," Ponce said. "I'd work in it, too. It would be my way to pay back society. It's one debt I'll always have."



Husker floor leader received solid guidance from stepfather Richard Ponce (right).

While Ponce waits on his lifelong dream, he's having a great time in his second and final year of succeeding Jack Moore as Nebraska's point guard.

"Day in and day out, game in and game out, David Ponce is one of the most consistent players on our team," said NU Coach Moe Iba. "The only thing that ever happens to David is that he wants to do so well, he puts pressure on himself. But he's a good guy to go to in a pinch."

In Nebraska's double overtime victory at Wisconsin, Ponce delivered the game-winning shot with seven seconds remaining. Against Colorado State, he scored the game-winning basket with eight seconds remaining.

In an overtime victory over Oklahoma State, Ponce turned defeat into victory with a dramatic basket at the two-second mark. In a one-point win at Kansas State, Ponce penetrated and dished off to Stan Cloudy, whose wide-open shot was rebounded in by teammate Ronnie Smith.

"David Ponce did his job. He got me a shot all by myself," Cloudy said. "He's got a great view of the whole court. That's why we always go to him at the end. That's when he's at his best. Coach Iba says get the ball in Ponce's hands because he'll run by three or four guys, if he has to."

Quickness is Ponce's foremost asset. Before the season even started, Iba called Ponce the quickest player in the Big Eight Conference, and by mid-February he had seen nothing to change his mind.

"David covered some great guards at the end of the season last year in the NIT," Iba said. "And he's done the same thing this year. He did a great job on Jay Humphries at Colorado. Humphries is probably the best guard in the league, but David stayed with him all night."

"I can't remember a point guard quicker than David Ponce," Cloudy said. "He's the quickest I've played with or against. He's at his best when we're running. When we had that shot clock in the NIT, he just took charge of things."

Even though he admits Ponce "isn't real flashy," NU center Dave Hoppen isn't so sure Ponce "wouldn't fit in a little better with a team that runs more."

"That guy never tires. He pressures full court. He's sweating to beat the band, but he never stops. He never gives up. He's probably in better shape than anybody on the team. And he works as hard or harder than anyone in a game."

Iba admits those qualities first attracted him to Ponce.

In Jack Moore, "we were losing an All-Big Eight player and three-year starter," Iba said. "We had to have someone come in and fill his shoes right away. David came out of a junior college program and has just done an excellent job."

According to Tom Baack, the NU assistant who recruited both Moore and Ponce,

"We've been where you're going."



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it would be unfair to compare the two.

"Jack was a ball-handler," Baack said. "We asked him to handle it all the time and he created a lot of opportunities for himself. He was here four years and had three great years. He had a better opportunity to learn our system."

"David got thrown right into it and our system isn't that easy," Baack said. "David put out right away. He's played well and given us a lot of leadership. He's a very unselfish player. He's willing to do everything we ask him to do."

Baack believes the attitude reflects the athlete. "David's just a great kid, on and off the floor," he said. "He's smart and he uses that intelligence on the court. The main reason he's at Nebraska is education. He keeps things in perspective. So many players worry about pro ball or playing in Europe. David just worries about his degree."

"David Ponce wants to do everything right," Iba said. "He goes after school like he goes after basketball. He'll make 'er . . . in whatever he does."

Ponce will make it because he will adapt to the situation.

"Even though he's quick enough to lead a running team, David really handles our team well. He fits right into Coach Iba's program," Hoppen said. "He can shoot, but he'll dish it off to the other guy. He can shoot the lights out, but he knows that's not his role."

Ponce's role is to lead and to win.

"David's the quickest guy I've seen this year, last year and the year before," offered NU guard Eric Williams. "When you have to get the ball down the floor, no one can stay with him."

"He has tremendous determination and tremendous drive. He goes at everything 100 percent and even if things don't come out right, he keeps his head up the same way."

Ponce missed a last-second shot that would have beaten Kansas in mid-February. But he was still the calmest player in a losing locker room.

"That's why he's our leader," Cloudy said. "He's better at that than anybody."

I'm not at all that way. He's got to hurt as much as anybody. But he'll keep his head up, so the younger guys keep their heads up."

Sandra Ponce, David's mother, still remembers the time she visited Lincoln and tried to cash an out-of-state check at a grocery store.

"Oh, are you David Ponce's mom?" asked the clerk.

"Yes, I am," she replied.

"We don't need any ID," said the clerk.

"I was so proud," Sandra Ponce said. "I thought my son was a celebrity or something. But when I told him about it, it didn't even faze him."

That's probably because David Ponce was analyzing something, just like he analyzed all those fireworks 10 years earlier.♦

Former Juco find kept Creighton off balance two years in a row.





The Express, from left, Jones, Thomas and Noonan.

Yearling Express Rolls On In Young's Debut

Freshmen defenders made a name for themselves while the offense made it 5-0 with a revolving quarterback system.

By Mike Babcock

The Express. Nebraska freshmen Stephen Thomas and Lee Jones were stopped at a railroad crossing one afternoon during two-a-day football practices when the inspiration came. As a freight train rolled by, Jones turned to Thomas and said, " 'The Express.' How About 'The Express?'"

"We'd thought of a lot of different names," Jones said. None, however, fit the way "The Express" did. Thomas liked it, and so did Jones. "Really, we both decided on it," he said.

All that remained was bringing fellow freshman Danny Noonan into the group and the Nebraska junior varsity football team's Express, its first line of defense, was complete. Noonan and Jones were the defensive tackles; Thomas was the middle guard.

The Express.

The nickname surfaced on chalkboards in team meeting rooms long before many of the freshmen on the Cornhusker junior varsity knew what it meant or where it came from. Each time the defense broke from its huddle, Thomas, Jones and Noonan would clap their hands and shout:



Linebackers, from left, Forch, Munford and Parsons cleaned up what got by The Express.

"Express."

At season's end, the nickname's brief history was still unclear. Even so, most attributed the name to either Jones or Thomas.

Why "The Express?"

"I guess because they run over people," veteran freshman Stan Parker said. Parker, an offensive tackle from Bellevue, Neb., missed playing his first year at Nebraska with an injury-forced redshirt.

"That defensive line was really tough," said monster Jeff Tomjack, another second-year freshman. "I don't know the tackling stats, but I doubt if anybody in the secondary had to make a lot of tackles. Nine out of 10 times, they (ball carriers) never got to us."

Thomas, Jones and Noonan were credited with 71 tackles among them, 10 of which were tackles for losses totaling 62 yards. Tomjack and Jerry Upton, a walkon cornerback from Minneapolis, Minn., were far and away the leading tacklers in the secondary. Upton made 19 tackles, and Tomjack was credited with 17.

"If they're fearsome enough to have a nickname, they must be pretty darn fearsome," freshman linebacker Kevin Parsons said.

The Express.

"We had a good defense, a darn good defense," Jones said after the Nebraska junior varsity completed a fourth consecutive 5-0 season. He, Thomas and Noonan were integral parts of this season's success.

"Our (jayvee) defense played particularly well," said Nebraska Head Coach Tom Osborne. According to Osborne, the 1983 Cornhusker freshmen defenders were "as good as we've had since I've been here."

Osborne's remarks weren't limited to The Express. Regular freshman linebackers Parsons, Marc Munford and Steve Forch were good enough to deserve their

own nickname. Jones spent the early part of fall camp as a linebacker before the coaches decided he wasn't needed at that position. Micah Heibel, the junior varsity's starting fullback throughout the season, also was a linebacker for one intrasquad scrimmage. But three quality linebackers were plenty.

"I wanted to play linebacker," said Jones. The problem was, "we had too many good people there. I practiced about two days at linebacker before they (coaches) moved me to tackle. They never did tell me why," Jones said.

Heibel, both a fullback and linebacker at Pius X High School in Lincoln, was recruited primarily as a linebacker. His career as a fullback appeared to be over after the Nebraska Shrine Bowl all-star game in early August.

"I've always felt more comfortable on the offensive side of the ball, but everybody started talking about me being a linebacker, so I figured, 'What the heck.' " Besides, "I thought I was too slow to play fullback."

After the first freshman intrasquad scrimmage, Heibel was given a choice between staying at linebacker or moving to fullback, a position made thin by the departure of Lawrence Quadrio, a walkon who got homesick and returned to Reno, Nev. Heibel was reluctant to switch positions because "I didn't want to look like I couldn't make it at linebacker," he said. Realizing, however, that it was a question of need rather than personal pride, he agreed to become a fullback. "I'll do whatever they want," said Heibel.

Jones had the same attitude, although "I didn't want to play offense. I like to do the hitting," he said. Even so, when Quadrio left, Jones was within "one man of being a fullback. If somebody had gotten hurt, I would've been there." The Express would've included Thomas, Noonan and someone else.

If the freshman line provided the emotional base for Nebraska's undefeated junior varsity defense, Jones provided the emotional base for the line. The former all-stater from Omaha Benson High School was one of the most gregarious freshmen.

"Lee was always getting us to sing," said Tomjack. Jones' first gospel sing-along was conducted one night during pre-season camp, while the team was waiting for a meeting to begin. Thomas, Jones' roommate during two-a-day practices, got it going.

According to Jones, the entire junior varsity season was a joy. "I loved working with those guys," he said. "We'll break up; I know that. But our senior year, we'll be back together. I just hope I'll be playing then."

The Express.

Craig Bohl, who coordinates the defense for Nebraska's junior varsity, tempers the youthful enthusiasm of his freshman Express.

"They're a little bit of talk right now; they think they're pretty tough," he said. Nevertheless, "they're Big Eight caliber. Those three guys provided a lot of leadership and stability. Mentally, their freshman year has prepared all of them, not just the linemen, to the point that they might not have to redshirt next season. We were able to put in all the base defenses and teach them the techniques. They were a great bunch to work with."

From the first day of fall camp, the 6-4, 235-pound Noonan impressed his coaches enough that when slowed by injuries, early in the season, he was called up for a brief time.

"He knows how to line up, and he makes very few mental mistakes," Bohl said, adding that mental mistakes "are characteristic of freshman (defensive) down linemen. They have a tendency to make a couple of big plays but not consistently fulfill their responsibilities."

Although his height might pose some problems with his playing defensive tackle, Jones is the quickest of the three. The 6-0, 215-pounder used his quickness to freelance, occasionally.

"On a slant, you can't block him," said Bohl. "Lee's so quick, he'll tackle the guy (ball carrier) in the backfield."

According to Bohl, the 6-4, 252-pound Thomas was probably the leader of the junior varsity defense, which put together a string of 10 shutout quarters and came within 11 yards of breaking the NU freshman record for rushing yards allowed in a season.

"Stephen was the 'bell cow,'" Bohl

Woodruff, left, walked on from Texas, while Jackson was a hot recruit from the East. said.

Thomas established that fact early. On the first play from scrimmage in the jayvees' first game, he sacked the quarterback. The two-time all-stater from Montbello High School in Denver "has a great future here," said Bohl.

The Express provided the junior varsity defense with enthusiasm. Tomjack, Charlie Cartwright and Brad Tyrer gave it the stability of a year's experience. All three were freshmen who had been granted additional seasons of eligibility following injuries a year ago. Tomjack and Cartwright are defensive backs. Tyrer is a defensive end. Prior to the season, Bohl took those three aside and asked their help in setting a good example for the highly-regarded freshman class.

"We were fortunate to have guys who had been around," Bohl said. Particularly players with the abilities of those three.

"Charlie (Cartwright) was like a leader to me," said cornerback Jerry Upton. "He really helped me with learning my techniques and how to play the run."

According to Bohl, Upton and end Jeff Jamrog, an all-stater from Mt. Michael High School in Elkhorn, Neb., were two of the most pleasant walkon surprises among the defenders.

Bohl, who helped Recruiting Coordinator Steve Pederson with the on-campus responsibilities last season, gave this fall's freshman class excellent marks. "We didn't miss on any scholarships we gave, and we filled in with several good walk-ons."

Nebraska also recruited some outstanding defensive players last season, many of whom redshirted this fall, and as a result, "our defense ought to be awfully good next season," Osborne said.

The Cornhusker freshman class wasn't devoid of outstanding offensive players, either. One of the most notable was running back Novell Jackson, a two-time prep All-American from Havre de Grace, Md., who rushed for over 3,000 yards and scored 36 touchdowns in his high school career.

Jackson combined with Pat Woodruff, a recruited walkon from Arlington, Texas, to give the junior varsity 580 yards and six touchdowns from its I-back position. A third freshman I-back, scholarship recruit Jon Kelley from Southeast High School in Lincoln, was forced to the sideline with a knee injury after the opening junior varsity game and will apply for a hardship and an additional season of eligibility.

A pulled hamstring in the first intra-squad scrimmage of the fall kept Jackson on the bench for the first junior varsity game and might have led to a redshirt sea-



son if Jackson had been willing. The morning before the second jayvee game, Jackson met with Osborne.

"Coach Osborne wanted to know, did I feel I was ready to go," said Jackson. "I told him I was."

Osborne asked Jackson if playing would be in his best interest, considering he had missed one game and a considerable amount of practice. Jackson said it would be. Osborne then said: "It's up to you."

Without hesitation, Jackson said he wanted to play. "I didn't want to sit out this year. I thought it would be best if I got some experience, but if it (the hamstring) hadn't felt better, I would have redshirted."

Jackson never doubted he would be allowed to answer the question of his redshirting. During his recruitment, Osborne told him so. Most Nebraska football players redshirt, but they're never under pressure to do so.

"Coach Osborne said to me, 'I know people will use that against us, but it's not true.'"

Jackson isn't averse to redshirting next season, after he's had a chance to prove himself in the spring and through pre-season fall camp. "If I feel I can't contribute to the varsity and if I think it's in the best interests of the team, I'll redshirt," he said.

That might mean switching from I-back to fullback. "Right now, I'm just going to go with it and let the pieces fall into place," said the 6-1, 203-pound Jackson.

Von Sheppard, a freshman from St. Paul, Minn., was initially recruited as an I-back, but that changed before he signed a letter of intent with the Cornhuskers. Nebraska wanted him as a wingback,

something "I didn't like at first," he said.

Before the first junior varsity game, Sheppard had decided wingback was "the position I should've been playing in high school, too." According to NU Freshman Coach Dan Young, Sheppard will have a good opportunity to earn a position with the varsity next fall without spending a redshirt season.

"He's got the skills . . . good quickness, good hands. He catches the ball well. It's just a matter of getting a little tougher and learning to block a little better."

Among the highlights of Sheppard's freshman season were a pair of punt returns for touchdowns, a 75-yarder against the William Jewell College jayvees and a 94-yarder against Waldorf Junior College.

"Von has good broken-field running ability. When you get him one-on-one, that's what you want," said Young.

Sheppard led the junior varsity in pass receiving, catching 11 for 159 yards and one touchdown. He also averaged 21.5 yards per return on his 10 punt returns and 27.1 yards per return on his six kickoffs. Jeff Tomjack, a defensive back, was the leading jayvee punt returner, however. He ran back four for 142 yards, an average of 35.5 per return. The second-year freshman from Ewing, Neb., was surprised when he was sent in to return a punt.

"I was told to do just like I did in high school," Tomjack said. "But I never returned punts in high school."

After Sheppard's 11 pass receptions, no one else had more than three, and split end Rod Smith was the only receiver with that many. Most of the junior varsity's yardage came on the ground.

The offensive line remained reasonably

stable from the beginning of the season to the end Tom Banderas at tight end, Stan Parker and Bill Macias at the tackles, Dan Bailey and either John McCormick or Jim Schaaf at the guards, and John Nichols at center.

"They improved a lot," Young said.

Bailey, from Gibbon, Neb., and Schaaf, from Superior, Neb., both walked on. Another offensive lineman, Derrick Green, a recruited walkon from Los Angeles, missed the fall with a knee injury.

The offensive position which received the most public attention, of course, was quarterback, a position at which the junior varsity began fall camp with four scholarship freshmen.

Come April, with Turner Gill and Nate Mason gone, the competition at quarterback should be spirited. Senior Craig Sundberg will enter spring camp as the clear cut No. 1, but after Sundberg, the field appears wide open. At least three of those four freshmen will join the battle.

Clete Blakeman is the one who may not. The former all-state from Norfolk, Neb., High School redshirted in the fall after suffering a severe lower back injury and missing the better part of three weeks of practice. Blakeman might be one of the freshman quarterbacks next fall.

"He'll still have four years of eligibility left, and we've talked to him about it if he's not capable of contributing at the varsity level," said Osborne.

In any event, all four of the freshmen "have a lot of potential," Osborne said. "Everybody's got a chance to travel (with the varsity) next season."

The other three, alphabetically, are McCathorn Clayton, Hendley Hawkins, and Jeff Taylor. According to Osborne, they're all "further along as freshmen than any quarterbacks we've had except Turner (Gill) and Craig (Sundberg)."

"They're mentally able to handle just about anything," said former Cornhusker quarterback Mark Mauer, whose responsibility it was to coach them as freshmen. "All three are pretty cool-headed quarterbacks."

Preparing three quarterbacks was difficult, but each was given an opportunity to start at least one junior varsity game, and they divided time as equally as possible. Blakeman was encouraged to redshirt, in part, because of the numbers. "We had to make a decision, and we didn't want to cut into the other three quarterbacks' (practice) time," Mauer said.

Each of the quarterbacks displayed different strengths, and each showed the need for improvement in at least one area. Clayton, who's from Orlando, Fla., "is the best runner," said Osborne.

A quick check of the final junior varsity statistics shows that. Clayton was the team's third leading rusher, behind Jackson and Woodruff, carrying 24 times

for 160 yards and five touchdowns. However, he completed only five-of-18 passes. "He needs to work on his throwing," Osborne said.

Hawkins, who's from Crenshaw High School in Los Angeles, "has probably the strongest arm and is maybe the quickest. He just needs to become more consistent."

Taylor, a former all-state quarterback from Omaha Westside High School, "is probably the most stable; he does the best job of running and throwing. But he needs to work on his speed and strength."

Blakeman also "needs to get stronger and faster." Ironically, Blakeman came off the bench to score the only touchdown in the varsity redshirts' 7-0 victory over the freshmen, a scrimmage which officially

brought to an end the junior varsity season.

That touchdown, set up by a fumble lost at the freshman 13-yard line, was about the only dent the redshirts could make in the freshman defense. The redshirt offense rushed 28 times for 76 yards and didn't complete a pass in five attempts.

"Our defense played really well," said Young.

Earlier in the fall, the redshirts took a scrimmage from the freshmen by 23-0. "The freshmen improved a lot," Osborne said, adding: "Obviously, they're a good defensive bunch."

"There's quite a bit of offensive talent, too. We're satisfied with what we've seen," he said. •

JV Season Stats

TEAM

Scores		NU	Opponent	10	Anderson	19	119	6.3	1	44
NU	Opponent									
27	Ellsworth JC				Hedlund	23	101	4.2	3	15
71	William Jewell JV				Sheppard	6	72	12.0	1	38
28	Northern Iowa JV				Taylor	25	51	2.0	2	17
27	Waldorf JC				Kelley	12	35	2.9	1	9
44	Kansas St. JV				Hawkins	22	29	1.3	1	46
					Behrens	1	7	7.0	0	7
					Prusia	2	1	0.5	0	2
					Holscher	2	-7	-3.5	0	0

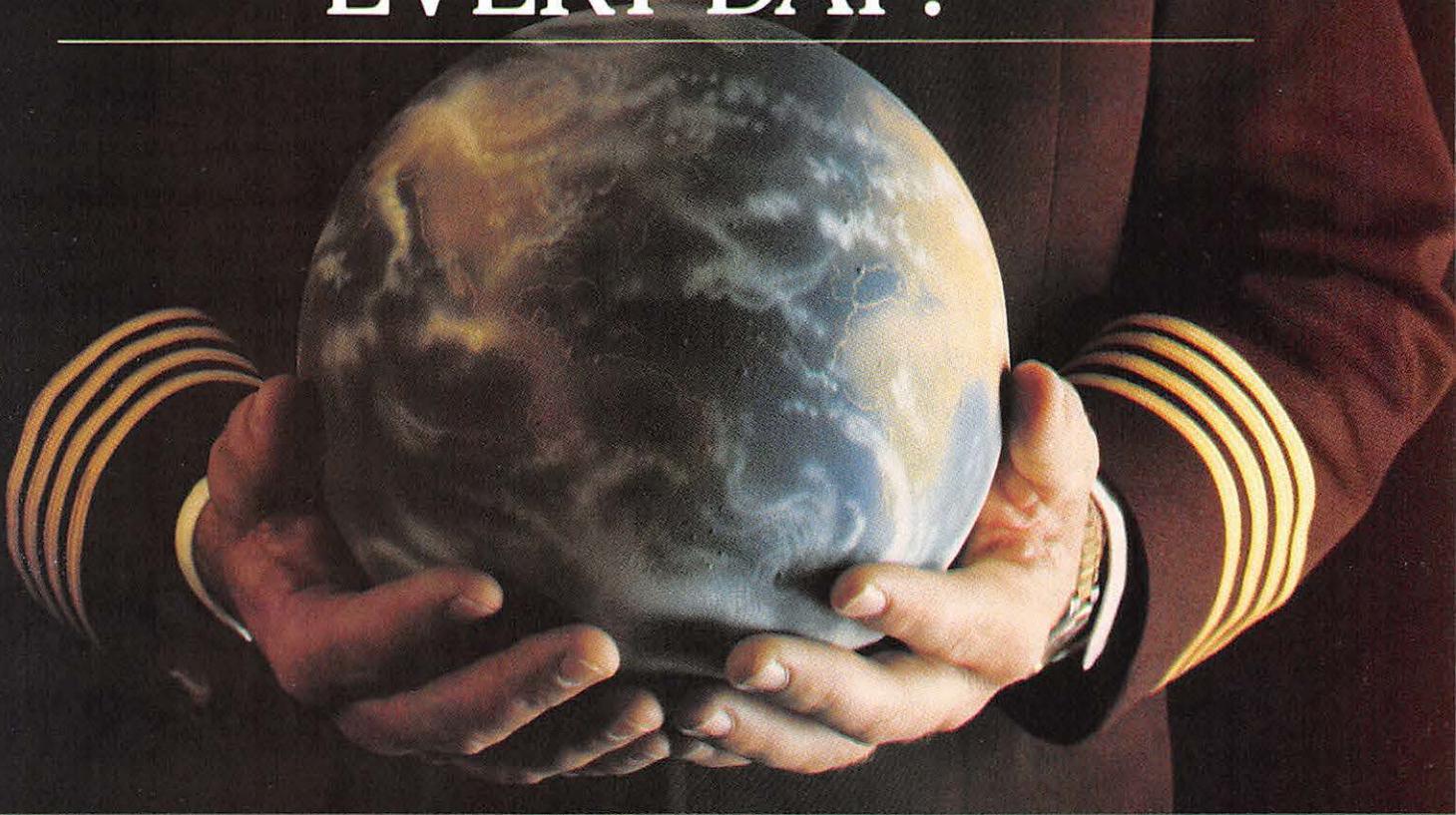
Passing		NU	Opp	Att.	Com.	Int.	Yds.	TD
NU	Opp							
First downs rushing	69	16	Taylor	22	11	1	215	2
First down passing	17	21	Hawkins	29	10	2	88	1
First downs penalty	2	5	Clayton	18	5	0	51	0
TOT. FIRST DOWNS	88	42						
Attempts rushing	271	168						
Yards gained rushing	1569	501						
Yards lost rushing	172	243						
NET RUSHING	1397	258						
Passes attempted	69	123						
Passes completed	26	46						
Passes had intercepted	3	13						
NET PASSING	354	662						
Total plays	337	291						
TOTAL YARDAGE	1751	920						
Interception return yds	98	8						
Punts-Yards	24-824	38-1421						
Punting average	34.3	37.4						
Punt returns-Yards	19-409	4-6						
Kickoff returns-Yards	13-313	27-351						
Penalties-Yards	37-257	13-94						
Fumbles-Fumbles lost	27-10	17-9						

Pass Receiving		NU	Opp	Att.	Com.	Int.	Yds.	TD
No.	Yds.							
Sheppard	11	159	14.5	31	1	0	0	0
Smith	3	30	10.0	17	0	0	0	0
Cope	2	64	32.0	49	1	0	0	0
Holscher	2	32	16.0	26	1	0	0	0
Banderas	2	21	10.5	15	0	0	0	0
Tewes	2	19	9.5	12	0	0	0	0
Jackson	2	4	2.0	4	0	0	0	0
Yost	1	18	18.0	18	0	0	0	0
Woodruff	1	7	7.0	7	0	0	0	0

Scoring		NU	Opp	TD	PAT	2-PAT	FG	TP
No.	Yds.							
Clayton	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	30
Jackson	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	24
Sheppard	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	24
Hedlund	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	18
Taylor	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	12
Woodruff	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	12
McBride	0	9.9	0	0	0	0	0	12
Schnitzler	0	12-14	0	0	0	0	0	12
Heibel	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	12
Kelley	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Anderson	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Hawkins	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Cope	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Holscher	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Groskurth	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Team (safeties)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2

Individual Rushing		Att.	Yds.	Avg.	TDs	Long Gain
No.	Yds.					
Woodruff	51	327	6.4	2	66	
Jackson	40	253	6.3	4	32	
Clayton	24	160	6.7	5	52	
Lewis	26	125	4.8	1	25	
Heibel	17	123	7.2	2	27	
						Team (safeties)

AIR MIDWEST FLIES "AROUND THE WORLD" EVERY DAY?



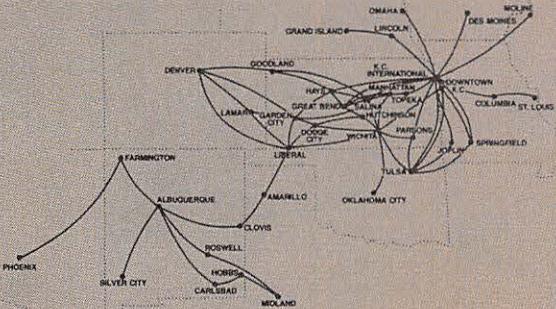
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Pink pins formed a line along the east coast of the United States, from Virginia to Massachusetts, on the map hanging in the office of Nebraska track and field coach Gary Pepin.

The center of the map was empty, and only a handful of the pins dotted the Houston and Los Angeles areas. The pins indicated the whereabouts of the best high school women sprinters in the country, said Pepin, adding: "We couldn't get a lot of the really good ones to even send back questionnaires. When that happens, we start scrambling."

To some degree Pepin has been scrambling ever since he assumed control of the entire Nebraska track and field program, both men and women, last spring. Initially, "we were in a state of semi-motion," he said. "We were trapped. Working with both teams, coaching and recruiting, was next to impossible. There are only so many hours in a day, and we didn't do a good job of recruiting with the women at all."

"With the men, though, we did a pretty good job."

Like many coaches, Pepin tends to exaggerate the problems; he can never have enough good athletes, so the search goes on.

Pepin's search isn't limited to the continental United States. By jet and by telephone, he and his assistants have reached not only coast-to-coast but also into South Africa and England, Canada and Jamaica in their attempts to build the Cornhusker program.

This year's Nebraska indoor track and field teams included 12 foreign athletes, nine of them from either Canada or Jamaica. Depending on whether you consider freshman sprinter Anthony Small's home as Canada (where he grew up) or Jamaica (where he was born and lived until age 7) Nebraska's Canadian Connection

was the strongest at the beginning of the indoor season.

In addition to Small, the Canadian Cornhuskers include distance runners Marc Adam and Mark Gundy, sprinter John Hastings and sprinter-long jumper Nicole Ali. All are from the Toronto area. Another Canadian, middle distance runner Ruth Pugh, left after two seasons to enroll in a chiropractic school closer to home. "There was no reason for her to stay," said Pepin.

The Nebraska track program's pipeline to Jamaica is well-known, extending back to Keith Gardner in the late-1950s. Dennis Wallace, a quarter-miler temporarily turned sprinter, is the only Jamaican on the men's team, while the women's team includes Janet Burke and Marcia Tate.

Nebraska's other foreign athletes come from Ireland, Gerard O'Callaghan; England, Laura Wight; and South Africa, Nicole Landmann.

Pepin coached the Nebraska women to back-to-back national indoor championships prior to being given responsibility for the NU men's team, too, so his expectations are high. He's familiar with the problems of recruiting track and field athletes.

It's a question of supply and demand. "There are a lot of good schools recruiting athletes in a lot of events," he said. "And we're all trying to start off with people of proven quality. That way, if they don't get much better, we've still got a good athlete."

"If the best high school women's sprinter in Massachusetts won't return a questionnaire, maybe one from Jamaica will. When you're willing to look anywhere, finding athletes is the easy part. Getting them interested in Nebraska isn't."

"You can go right down the line . . . weather, academics, distance from home," said Pepin.

Pepin gave the overwhelming task of keeping track of so many athletes to assistant coach Linda Zech, who coordinates the Cornhusker recruiting efforts. There are so many names and so many numbers, "we need a computer or a word-processor," he said.

Much of the work collating information was done by unpaid volunteers. "Coaches' wives were in here on weekends. We used students and future students. It's really been difficult for Linda. She took Christmas Day off, otherwise, she wouldn't have had a Christmas vacation." The same was true for the rest of the coaching staff.

Jay Dirksen put 5,000 miles on his car during December, and "you never know, we might not get anything out of it," Pepin said. By early February, Nebraska had been in the homes of more than 80 athletes.

That number has increased, geometrically. After the initial questionnaires and phone calls, the Cornhusker coaches begin the long process of visiting and persuading. "With the majority of the kids in the United States, you'd better be in their

Nebraska Map When

Under new boss Gary Pepin, men's and women's talent hunting has gone intercontinental with initial success.

By Mike Babcock

Canadian Connection, from left, recruiter Linda Zech, John Hastings, Mark Gundy, Anthony Small, Nicole Ali and Marc Adam.



homes to meet them," said Pepin.

With foreign athletes, of course, such visits usually aren't possible. The expense is prohibitive, so much depends on the recruiter's ability to persuade over the telephone.

That's how Nebraska recruited Landmann. NU assistant coach Mark Devenney initiated Landmann's recruitment after noting her efforts in a magazine devoted to South African track and field. The Cornhuskers succeeded primarily because "we were the first ones there," Devenney said. By the time other schools made their recruiting pitch, Landmann was committed to Nebraska.

Nebraska ran up large telephone bills recruiting Landmann. "We made more phone calls than most people would have made because we care about the athletes," said Devenney. "Even after she committed, we kept in touch. One of the problems we have in recruiting foreign athletes is that their coaches think we're using them."

Dennis Wallace, a sprinter from Georges Plain, Jamaica, says he picked

most recent junior national championships. But "I don't like it as well as track." Landmann's first track event was the 400 meters, but just over a year ago, after much encouragement, she gave the 800 a try. Middle distance seems to be her strength.

Landmann arrived in mid-January, purchased a "good coat," and immediately made herself a home in Nebraska. "My dad was pretty worried because he wondered would I be happy here," she said. "I love it in Nebraska; the people are so friendly, and the team's great."

"Everyone told me how cold it was going to be, but I've got to accept that. I can't change the weather."

Surprisingly enough, Nebraska's weather can be an advantage in recruiting. Laura Wight, whose home is near London, in Letchworth, England, says she prefers the cold to the blistering heat she encountered on her arrival in the fall.

"It was so hot, I couldn't stand it," Wight said. Wight was an English county champion at distances from 800 meters to 3,000 meters, but she may be strongest at

partly because she arrived just before indoor competition began. Her father, however, had a difficult time accepting her absence. "Three days after she got here, I called her father to let him know everything was okay," said Devenney. "He told me, 'I'd better get a letter from her pretty soon, or she's coming home.' It takes a letter two weeks to travel from Lincoln to Landmann's home in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Distance prevents visiting most foreign athletes whose homes are located outside of North America. Even so, special instances can arise.

The recruitment of Landmann and fellow South African Verster was conducted by telephone. But if Nebraska would have been able to convince South Africa's Zola Budd to become a Cornhusker, "we would have figured out a way to get there," Pepin said.

Track and Field News ranks Budd No. 1 in the world at 5,000 meters and No. 10 at 3,000 meters. Pepin tried without success to bring Budd to Nebraska, but there's still hope, he says.

Canadian athletes are close enough that they can make recruiting visits to Nebraska. Sprinter Anthony Small, who enrolled at mid-year, came to Lincoln the weekend of the Nebraska-UCLA football game. Canada's junior champion at both

Track Needs World Recruiters Travel

Nebraska because of its reputation for fulfilling commitments.

The Cornhuskers will "stick with you," Wallace said. "You know you'll get four years of education."

Many foreign track and field athletes come to the United States on scholarship and then have their scholarships taken away if they get injured or don't perform up to expectations.

Landmann, who began her running career in cross country, was coached by her father Albert Landmann, one of South Africa's greatest race walkers. She didn't follow him in race walking, however, because "it's not very big in South Africa," Landmann said.

She hasn't stopped running cross country; she finished second in South Africa's

1,500 meters, the distance on which she plans to concentrate.

Devenney also made most of the phone calls to Wight, who describes her recruitment this way: "They called me up and offered me a scholarship." She thought it sounded like fun and accepted.

It wasn't much fun first semester, but after spending nearly a month at home over Christmas vacation, she returned with renewed enthusiasm. And once Nebraska's indoor season began, everything was fine.

Landmann made a quicker adjustment,

South Africa's Verster plays "rabbit" for mile-winning Adam.



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100 and 200 meters liked what he saw.

Because of the late start at recruiting, Pepin tried to bring in several athletes at mid-year. In addition to Small and Landmann, high jumper Darren Burton didn't become a Cornhusker until after semester break.

Burton transferred from Gloucester County Community College in Sewell, N.J., where he was the national junior college outdoor champion in the high jump. By the second meet of the indoor season, he had broken Doug Phelps' four-year-old school record with a jump of 7-1 1/4.

Another New Jersey athlete, freshman Stephan Fletcher, illustrates the energy of Nebraska's recruiting effort under Pepin. Fletcher, who's from Princeton, N.J., ranked second among the nation's high school athletes in the 42-inch, 110 meter hurdles, having run :14.30, and first in the 60-yard high hurdles, indoors. Twice he was the New Jersey high school hurdles champion, both indoors and outdoors.

Fletcher had visited Lincoln to compete in the U.S. junior national championships and "really liked it. I needed some place to go to change the pace of my life," he said. Besides, "I had always really liked Nebraska when I was a football player."

Because of a shoulder injury, Fletcher was forced to give up football, his first sports love, during his sophomore season in high school. Nevertheless, football retained its attraction for him.

One of Fletcher's high school teammates was Nebraska I-back Paul Miles, who helped in the recruitment of his friend. "Paul told me a lot of positive things about Nebraska," said Fletcher.

Freshmen like Fletcher and Canadian sprinter John Hastings and transfers like Burton and middle distance runner Glen Cunningham, who came to Nebraska from Mount San Antonio College in Walnut, Calif., help provide new enthusiasm for veterans like Wallace, distance runner Marc Adam, hurdler Ed Ross, pole vaulter Glen Loontjer, and distance runner Gerard O'Callaghan on the men's team.

And the most familiar names on the women's team are now Landmann and Wight, as well as Angela Thacker, Rhonda Blanford, Janet Burke, Jennie (Gorham) Badami, Nicole Ali and Marcia Tate.

Nebraska's aggressive recruiting efforts have paid off, but Pepin says a considerable amount of work still must be done. "You try to get the best athletes you can get, ones who can score points immediately," he said. "You try to fill holes on your team, plus you want as many athletes as you can get."

In order to accomplish those things, "you have to spend money," said Pepin. And, he would add, not limit the area in which you recruit.

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Opinions



Ask Tom Osborne

If you have questions for Coach Tom Osborne, write to Huskers Illustrated, Box 83222, Lincoln, Neb., 68501. We reserve the right to select only those questions we feel appropriate.

Dear Coach Osborne, "In the last few years, Nebraska hasn't been as devastating on defense as you were when you had the big tackles like Mike Fultz and Rod Horn. Why were all the huge linemen last season on the offensive side of the ball?" Cory Stejskal, Huntington Beach, Calif.

"When you look at the pro draft, it is true that we didn't have the bigger defensive linemen like Rod Horn, Bill Barnett, Dan Pensick and Oudious Lee. We did have Toby Williams and Jeff Merrell the year before. But last year, we didn't have the overwhelming physical talent overall. We're hoping to have a little more talent and a lot more depth this year. Typically, you end up playing at least four tackles and two noseguards. Last year, we ended up with three tackles and they weren't always healthy. We've got some redshirts who should help solve the problem — people like Chris Spachman, Lawrence Hart, Kevin Blackmer and possibly Phil Rogers. We also think some freshmen will show some promise in spring ball — Danny Noonan, Lee Jones and Steven Thomas. Most of these guys are bigger and we think they're good players."

Dear Coach Osborne, "When Tom Novak played, retiring his number wasn't any problem. Then, we retired the numbers of Johnny Rodgers and Rich Glover. Still no problem. But in the last two years, we've retired the numbers of Dave Rimington, Mike Rozier and Dean Steinkuhler. Are you a victim of your own success? For a program that thrives on numbers, are you being forced to reanalyze your thinking on retiring numbers?" Barry Johnson, Minneapolis, Minn.

"We've only had two Heisman Trophy winners in 80-some years of football at Nebraska. And the odds of winning the Outland and Lombardi Awards are about like winning the Heisman. So I think we'd be able to lose a couple more jerseys without too much of a problem. There might come a time when we have to do something. But right now, we're in good shape. The equipment men have talked about using some retired numbers in practices and scrimmages. And really, that's a bigger problem than the games themselves."

"Past performances by Nebraska in night games (including Southern Cal in 1970, UCLA in '72, LSU in '76 and Hawaii in '82 as well as several Orange Bowls, including the last two against LSU and Miami) seem to indicate that something is missing. Miami and LSU both play most of their games at night. The biological clock of our bodies is something that is cyclical and something that determines our strengths. Does the idea of setting the players' clocks back five hours for two weeks prior to the Orange Bowl make any sense?"

"That's not the real problem. The two most unpredictable games of the year are the first game because you're breaking in a lot of new players

and the bowl game because you're coming off a five to seven-week layoff. You're completely out of your normal rhythm for the regular season. I talked to Duffy Daugherty (former Michigan State coach) the other day and he said he always thought the national champion should be crowned at the end of the regular season because bowl teams are different teams. And there is an element of truth in that. I know the competition is more even in bowl games and that accounts for a lot of the unpredictable things that happen.

"But the real problem is the number of distractions and living out of a suitcase for 10 days to two weeks. If you go to Oklahoma on Friday, there's no great advantage for them. But if you go to Norman and stay 10 days, that would be a distinct advantage. Look at the teams from the Big Ten and all the problems they have in the Rose Bowl. Bo Schembechler has only won one Rose Bowl and that was when Michigan played Washington. When you lose to USC and UCLA seven or eight times, I think the familiarity of the surroundings has something to do with it.

"The Orange Bowl would be no problem at all if you played another Northern team. But when you play a Southern team used to the heat and one that has the advantage of its own field, that's worth seven to 10 points before the game. I don't think Howard Schnellenberger would disagree with that. He made some comments about how much the crowd, the weather and the time away from home meant. But we knew that going down there. I'm not complaining about it. We knew we'd have to play over that to win the national championship and we didn't."

Dear Coach Osborne, "I usually hate to question any of the plays you call because to me, you're an offensive genius. But I question the pass for the two-point conversion against Miami in the Orange Bowl. Because of the lateral pursuit of Miami's linebackers and cornerbacks, wouldn't the option have been a better play?" Roy Barnes, Wauwatosa, Wis.

"Studying Miami's films, we thought flooding their zone with three receivers was the best percentage play to run in a situation like that. The play was there. The defensive back covering Irving Fryar went man-to-man with Irving the first couple steps. Then he stumbled and left Irving a little off balance. I don't know if Turner even saw the guy. He lobbed the ball and it was just a little bit behind Jeff Smith. Normally, it would still be a real easy catch. But the guy covering Irving had enough time to get a couple fingers on the ball. Under the same set of circumstances, that play would have worked three out of four times. It's just like the 4th and 8, where Jeff scored a touchdown on the option. It was a surprising call and because it worked, it was a great call. This didn't, so it's not, even though I still think it's the best percentage play in that situation."